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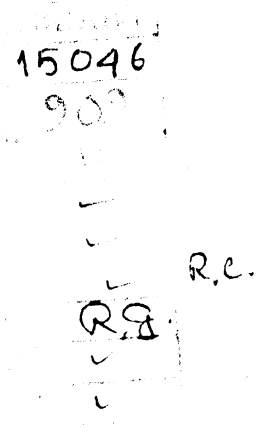
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THE WORLD

I

ENGLAND

Our country is but a small island, that has yet been able to make itself one of the richest and greatest lands in the world. It is not nearly so large as France or Germany, and would count only as a province of Russia. There are much bigger States in Africa and America that have not so many people in them as has an English city. Some of the countries in Asia are more thickly populated, but none of them have so much to be thankful for as the inhabitants of England.

Britain, of which England is the southern half, owes much of its good fortune to having the sea all round it as a protection against enemies. From time to time, indeed, warriors from over the sea have landed in our island, so that its people came to be made up of a mixture of races ; but after fighting a good deal among themselves, most of those strangers, Saxons, Danes, and

Normans, ended by settling down among the original Britons as one nation, with which they would allow no more meddling from outside. Then they took better care than most nations not to let themselves be oppressed by selfish tyrants; and through our fathers standing up for freedom and justice, we grew to be governed by laws that allow every man to enjoy his own, doing much as he likes, so long as he do no harm to his neighbour.

Another advantage England has is in a temperate climate, changeable and cloudy, to be sure, but healthy. This, too, it owes to being an island, surrounded by sea-water and sea-breezes, that keep it from being so hot in summer or so cold in winter as other places at the same distance from the Poles and the Equator. People who live in the hot tropics are apt to be lazy, as everything there grows so fast and so big that men can usually get enough to eat without much trouble of working for it. Those living in the Arctic regions, on the other hand, are so frozen up in ice and darkness for half the year that it is all they can do to keep themselves alive. But we are born in an air that sets children running about to play out of doors; then most of us grow up active and hardy enough not to mind what bad weather we have to bear, with fine days and weeks often coming in between rainy and stormy ones, and seldom such extremes of heat and cold as elsewhere drive men to sleep away their time in idleness.

Through Britain's being an island, with many river

mouths and other harbours, its people came to be at home on the sea. Many of its boys take to the water like ducks, making bold sailors, who have gone all over the world to trade with every country. To defend us against foes who might attack us, we depend more on our navy—the most powerful in the world—than on our soldiers, though we know how they can do their duty when called on. British soldiers and sailors have planted our flag on so many parts of the earth that this little land of ours now rules over a wide Empire, upon which the sun can be said never to set; while some countries much larger than England have been turned into colonies filled with sons and daughters of our race.

The greatness of England is shown in its capital, London, by far the largest and richest city in the world, to which come the productions and the traders of every region. Among the inhabitants of London, or its visitors, will be found people from all civilized nations, as Englishmen themselves are found going out to all ends of the earth, so that their language, already the most widely spread, seems likely to become the best known of all the countless different tongues spoken by the human race. And, besides London, there are a dozen British cities, such as Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Sheffield, Bristol, any one of which would make a capital for most other countries; while other places once more famous, like York, Winchester, Oxford, Canterbury, Norwich, and so on, have not

grown so fast, but are all the more pleasant to live in for not being noisy hives of commerce or manufacture.

Looking at England as Nature made it, we find much the same features as in other countries, yet wrinkled and coloured into a peculiar aspect, as our faces all have a nose, a mouth, and eyes, while each takes on an expression of its own, so that one person will seldom be mistaken for another. Our country is made of different qualities of rock and soil, sometimes swelling into hills, sometimes flattened into plains, that have taken shape through long ages, carved out by rain and wind, heat and frost, the tools of Nature, working so slowly that generations of men pass away without being able to note any change in the scenery around them.

The special pattern of English scenery may be said to be its variety. Some countries appear to be a mass of stony mountains, others nearly all made up of sandy plains ; but the natural features of England are so mixed together that one is seldom out of sight of a hill or a river valley, where woods and pastures, crops and gardens, can be seen growing side by side.

So much rain comes over our island from the sea that everything can grow here that does not need a hot sun. Thus in summer our fields make quite a patchwork of colour, while the commonest tint is the green of grass and of trees dotted about the hedgerows and roadsides. Then, since the country has long been

thickly populated, every corner of it is brought into cultivation except commons and moors, that serve to feed sheep and game. The tangled forests that once covered the ground have been cleared away or broken up into woods and parks. The wet marshes are mostly drained to make farms, and almost everywhere the rough face of Nature has let itself be more or less trimmed and dressed by the hand of man.

The villages and small towns of England are noted for a snug and cosy look, showing how for hundreds of years they have made groups of peaceful homes, though perhaps their name may be famous for some great battle long ago. Farms and cottages, inns and shops, meadows and gardens, stand jumbled up in a friendly way; then, at the end of the village street, as often as not, rise the trees about a lordly mansion, whose master may have come here as a conquering tyrant; but the old grudges between his family and his neighbours have been forgotten, like the wars that once ruined castle and hovel.

There are, however, some marked differences in certain parts of England. One district will be mainly made up of hills and moors hollowed out by rushing streams; another of fertile plains, on which the mountain brooks come together to fill slow and deep rivers, letting boats and ships float to the towns that have grown up on their banks. There is no mistaking for one another the heathery moorlands of Yorkshire, the turfy downs of Sussex, the rich valleys of Devon, or

the green flats of the Fen Country. Some parts are more or less beautiful and healthy than others; but wherever one has lived from childhood, one gets to believe in his own country-side as the best part of England, and in England, taken altogether, as the best country on earth.

After differences made by Nature, we find others that are the work of man. For convenience of government every country becomes divided into separate districts or sections, under one or another name, whose people get into the way of sticking more closely together, like the children of one family or the pupils of a school. In England the largest division is called a county, or shire, which sometimes the country-people still pronounce *sheer*, showing how it came from the same word as shears, and meant a part cut or shorn off.

The counties, as we see on a map, are of very varying size, from Rutland, our smallest shire, to Yorkshire, the largest—so large that it has three divisions, called "Ridings," a word corrupted from "Trythings," or third parts. Their names, too, are of different origin. Some are called after the old Anglo-Saxon kingdoms which they represent, as Kent, Essex, and Sussex. A few keep the name of some ancient tribe who once lived in that part of the country, as Somerset and Dorset, formerly inhabited by the *Somersætas* and *Dorsætas;* or Cumberland, the land of the *Cumri.* Norfolk and Suffolk, of course, were the North Folk

and the South Folk of the old kingdom of East Anglia. Most of the others took their name from that of the chief town—*Chester*, *Lincoln*, *Oxford*, and so on.

The counties were further divided into Hundreds, districts that could supply a hundred men for service in war. We do not hear much of Hundreds nowadays, because other divisions have taken their place in most matters of public business. But the further division into parishes is one quite familiar to all of us who live in the country. The centre of the parish is the church, which brought neighbours together and gave them the feeling that they belonged to one place—the same feeling that, on a larger scale, becomes patriotism, the love of one's country. Parishes, like counties, are of very unequal size, some of them many miles long, others as much smaller as Rutland is than Yorkshire. One parish will have hardly a house left upon it; another, on which some great town may happen to have been built, contains tens of thousands of people. In such towns you will find people who can hardly tell you to what parish they belong, as may seem strange to country folk, who see their own church tower or spire every day of their lives. That the limits of the parish may not be forgotten, it is the custom still in some places to "beat the bounds" once a year; and in the rough old days it was not uncommon to beat a boy or two at certain boundary marks by way of fixing these on their memory.

Each parish has its Council to look after its own

affairs. Then groups of parishes are joined together under a District Council, with larger affairs to attend to. Above this, again, comes the County Council, that looks after the business of the shire as Parliament does for the whole kingdom. London has a County Council of its own, and there are other great towns that rank as independent counties.

But for certain purposes parishes and counties are grouped together in different ways. There are Unions of several parishes for the working of the Poor Law, with a workhouse between them, thence often called the union. There are Petty Sessional Divisions, that in the same way have a police-court as the old Hundreds had their courts and public meetings. There are Electoral Divisions, that send members to Parliament to have their say in the affairs of the nation. Counties are joined together to make up what is called a diocese, under one bishop. There are further legal and ecclesiastical divisions—so many that Britain is said to be divided in forty different ways.

Other names, though not legal ones nor taken notice of in maps, are well understood. We speak of the Midlands in the centre of England, of the Borderland between England and Scotland, and of the Home Counties, meaning those about London. Then there are districts that get a name from their natural characteristics—the Lake Country, the Fen Country, the New Forest, Salisbury Plain ; or from ranges of hills running through them, as the Cotswolds of Gloucester-

shire, the Wolds of Lincoln, and the Peak of Derbyshire; or, again, from their chief river—the Thames Valley, Tyneside, and the Vales or Dales of many Esks and Avons, these names being old British words for water.

Another class of names comes from the industry chiefly carried on in particular districts. Thus we have the "Black Country," so named from the smoke of its manufactories; the "Potteries," the "Cotton Country," the "Woollen Towns" of Yorkshire, their furnaces and chimneys kept going by the many coal-mines that in different parts supply the chief wealth of England. In the old days the working of iron and other metals was chiefly carried on in forest-lands, like that of Sussex, which gave plenty of fuel for the furnaces; but later on such industries chiefly flourished where coal could be easily got to work steam-engines. But now steam begins to give place to electricity, that can be brought forth by water-power, so that new centres of manufacturing may rise up on streams harnessed by mills to the service of man.

There are so many people in our country that they no longer grow crops enough to feed them all, but must depend on exchanging their manufactures for corn and other productions brought to our ports from every quarter of the world. The population is, of course, thickest in and about the great commercial and manufacturing towns. It is thinnest on wet and windy moorlands like the rocky promontory of Cornwall,

where not even trees grow well unless in the hollows, and the bare hills are dotted with smokeless chimneys and tumble-down buildings, over mines of tin and copper that have been worked out, leaving little for the people to live on but fishing off the coast and pasturing of sheep and cattle among their poor fields.

A southern point of Cornwall is named the Land's End, and a bare, stony edge of Caithness, called John o' Groat's House, has the fame of being the most northerly part of the British mainland. Cyclists often make the run between these two points, a road of 800 or 900 miles, that carries them through many changing scenes, brown hills, green valleys, smoky towns, quiet villages, cultivated plains, and rocky moorlands, succeeding one another like the pictures of a panorama. More than half-way they cross the Cheviot Hills or the River Tweed, marking the English border, beyond which they are in Scotland.

II

SCOTLAND

SCOTLAND is the smaller and the poorer part of Britain. A good half of it is made up of rough hills, fit chiefly to support sheep and deer. The whole population is hardly so great as that of London, in which, indeed, more Scotsmen may be found than in most Scottish towns. Their own land being so poor, the Scots have

for long been in the way of leaving it to seek their fortune abroad; and they have a knack of getting on well wherever they go, so that there are few parts of the world where some of them may not be found flourishing.

Before trade and travel gave them a chance of prospering peacefully, the Scots had fighting for their chief employment. In the old days, unless they could hire themselves out as soldiers in foreign countries, they were always too ready to fight with one another, and the history of Scotland makes a terrible story of hatred and bloodshed. But their main enemy was England, whose kings again and again tried to conquer this neighbouring country, but found it too well defended by its own ruggedness and by the courage of its people. Meanwhile the princes of both countries sometimes married into one another's families; then in time a Scottish King came to be heir to the English Crown as well as his own, so under him Scotland and England were joined together, and gradually grew to be friends, all their old quarrels being forgotten except as matter for songs and stories. Scotland still keeps her own laws and customs, in some ways different from those of England; but the two countries are now united in one, its full name the Kingdom of Great Britain.

Scotland is made up of two or, indeed, three different regions. The south is the Border country of green hills and moors, in some parts rising as high as mountains. Then in the centre, and stretching along the

sea-coast on the east side, come the Lowlands, the most fertile and best-populated part of the country. Here we have Glasgow, on the Clyde, a great trading and manufacturing city as big as Liverpool, these two coming next to London in size. Edinburgh, the old capital of Scotland, is not half so large as Glasgow in our time, but it is one of the famous cities of the world for its fine situation above the mouth of the Forth, where the Lothian country about it makes one of the best-farmed districts in the kingdom. On the east coast also, at the mouths of the Tay and the Dee, stand the next largest cities, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Beyond the rivers Forth and Clyde the land swells up into wild mountains, separated by valleys here known as glens ; and almost all along the west side it is broken into wet and windy islands, many of them also roughened by peaks and ridges. This is the Highlands, the most beautiful part of Scotland, but also the poorest, since the rocky and boggy soil is not good for cultivation, and there are no manufactures to bring people together in large towns. In some parts one may walk through the Highlands for a day, and hardly come upon what would count as a village in England. Much of this country, indeed, is used mainly for breeding deer, grouse, and other game to give sport for rich men, who find amusement also in catching salmon and trout in the rushing rivers and great lakes of the Highlands.

The Lowland people are mostly of much the same

mixed race as the English, and speak the same language, though with differences of dialect such as may be found in England itself, where a Devonshire and a Cumberland man, for instance, sometimes find it hard to understand each other. Such differences, however, are gradually dying out, now that everybody goes to school and learns to read English from the same books. The people in the Highlands belong to a race of older inhabitants related to the Irish and the Welsh, and many of them still keep their own ancient language, called Gaelic, though the young folk are taught English in school. The Highlanders have always been known as brave and hardy, good at nothing so much as fighting, so that this part of Scotland was the last to settle down quietly under the British Government. But now these kilted Highlanders, who gave our kings so much trouble, make the bravest and faithfullest soldiers of the British army, in which they are distinguished by their picturesque national dress, not much worn nowadays in the Highlands except by soldiers, sportsmen, and youngsters.

Everybody knows how the main peculiarity of this dress is the tartans, chequered in various patterns of red, green, and yellow. Highland regiments are still named from their tartan uniform, the Gordons, the Camerons, or the Seaforths, having been originally made up of men of one name or from one neighbourhood who would all wear the same tartan. In the old days Highlanders kept together in clans, who looked

on themselves as one great family supposed to be descended from the same ancestor, and obeying the same chief much better than they obeyed any king. They thought very little of belonging to a country like Scotland, but a great deal of being Camerons or Campbells, Macdonalds or Macphersons, as the case might be ; and each of these clans was usually as ready to go to war with its neighbour as their sons are to play a football match. Many of the clans are known by the prefix *Mac*, meaning "son of," as *O* does in Ireland, where O'Donnell answers to Macdonald in the Highlands and to Donaldson in English-speaking parts of the country.

At one time each clan held its own glens and mountains, which could be spoken of as the Cameron country, the Macdonald country, and so forth ; and in certain districts many of the people are still found bearing the same name, so that here and there a man called Campbell or Mackay could hardly be known from his neighbours without some by-name, such as that of the place where he lived. But in our time the clans have got much mixed up all over Scotland—over Britain, indeed, and over all the world, till there are in London, perhaps, more Campbells than in Campbelton, and in Canada more Macdonalds than could now be found in all the Highlands.

If Scotsmen, Highland and Lowland, are found often living abroad, from all parts of the world strangers come to visit Scotland, so famous for the beauty of its

mountain scenery and for romantic stories of its past. In some other parts of the world the Highland mountains would count only as hills; but they have a particular beauty in their heathery sides, their wooded glens, and the foaming streams that sometimes gather into lovely lakes. The Great Glen, as it is called, running slantwise right across the Highlands from south-west to north-east, holds a chain of lakes joined together by rivers and cuttings so as to make what is called the Caledonian Canal, by which tourists can pass right through the wild hills in a steamer. Then, of course, there are railways, hotels, and other conveniences that now make Scotland far more easy to travel in than are much grander mountain regions of other countries.

At the south end of the Caledonian Canal stands up Ben Nevis, the highest point not only of Scotland, but of all the British Isles, so high that its head is often hidden in clouds, and so cold that snow sometimes lies there at the height of summer. At the top of it has been built an observatory, a strong tower like a lighthouse, which is nearer the sky than any other building in Britain. For some years it was inhabited by a small band of weather-watchers, making careful observations that go to show how our many changes of weather are no matter of chance, but depend on natural laws now beginning to be so far understood that what we may expect in the way of rain and sunshine can be guessed at a day or two ahead. Those hardy observers had

themselves to put up with the worst kinds of weather. For months they might be snowed up in their airy home; for weeks they could see nothing but rain and mist; for days they would hardly be able to stir out into the storm howling around them, and bombarding their stronghold with lumps of snow and ice. But when the sky was clear they had a glorious view over half Scotland—a hundred miles of mountains, spread out like a sea of crests and ridges, with green glens and blue waters between the waves of rock and heather.

III

WALES

THE mountainous west side of England, behind the Severn and the Dee, is Wales, which has long been joined to England in government and laws, but is in some respects a different country. All over the world we find that where foreign invaders have settled down upon open plains the conquered people often took refuge in hilly parts from which it was not so easy to drive them. Thus, when Britain was overrun by Romans, Saxons, and Normans, the original Britons retreated into the mountains of Wales, as into the Highlands of Scotland and into the wild moors of Cornwall, and there were able to stand out against those enemies. The people of Wales to-day are much the same people as once lived all over Britain, and they

still prefer to speak their own ancient language, though most of them understand English also.

Welshmen may be known by their peculiar names. Christian names were the first used, and the surnames afterwards added would often mean the son of So-and-so, James the son of John becoming James Johnson, unless he got to be known rather by the name of his trade—*Butcher*, *Baker*, *Butler*, or what not—or perhaps by some remarkable feature of appearance, as the colour of his hair or skin—*Brown*, *Black*, or *White*, as the case might be. The Welsh prefix meaning son, like the *Mac* of Scotsmen and the *O* of Irishmen, is *Ap*, and this is found in several Welsh names contracted to *P* or *B*, as Prichard, the son of Richard, or Bowen and Bevan, the sons of Owen and Evan, which latter are old British forms of John. Later on the Welsh took to using English forms of their fathers' names, with *s* added to signify "son"; so came the names Williams, Jones, Roberts, that in some parts of Wales are as common as Campbell is in Scotland or Smith all over the kingdom.

The Welsh may well be fond and proud of their country, for it is a beautiful land of mountains, rivers, and lakes, like the Scottish Highlands. But also a great part of the soil is poor, so that not many people can get a living here; and Glasgow and Liverpool between them could hold the whole population of Wales. Some of the Welsh cathedral cities, St. David's, St. Asaph's, and Llandaff, appear little more

than big villages. Nearly half the population is crowded into one southern county, Glamorgan, which by coal-mines, iron and copper works, and other industries, is far the richest part of Wales, and on its coast has the two largest towns, Cardiff and Swansea, each with more people than belong to most of the Welsh counties. In North Wales there are no very large towns, but this end has the grandest mountains, the chief of them Snowdon, which is the highest point of South Britain.

One can walk or ride up Snowdon for a view over a sea of surrounding mountain crests; and now there is a railway to take one to the top. Round about Snowdon are the great slate-quarries that make the principal industry of North Wales. Here one may pass for a mile or two through what seems a mountain country on a small scale—precipices, passes, and mounds, all of slate, and the ground gravelled with bits of this easily broken stone. We see the best slates on the roofs of our houses; but none of the stone is wasted, the fragments being made into a kind of brick, or ground down to powder, which can be pressed together again in the form of slate-pencils.

The sea-coast of Wales is also very beautiful, where several of its towns, Rhyl, Llandudno, Barmouth, Aberystwith, Tenby, and others, have become favourite bathing-places, visited in summer by people from all parts of the kingdom. Wales includes the Island of Anglesey, the sacred isle of the Druid priests of ancient

Britain, now joined to the mainland by two long bridges across the Menai Straits. When these bridges were first built, they passed for wonders, but our time has seen the making of still more wonderful works, such as the Forth Bridge in Scotland.

The Welsh women used to wear a national costume of red cloaks and high black hats, that are not so often seen nowadays. Of this dress a curious story is told. The last time Britain came to be invaded was a little more than a hundred years ago, when a small body of Frenchmen landed on the coast of South Wales. A still smaller force was hastily gathered to attack them, and on the hills behind appeared a crowd of country-folk looking on from a safe distance. It is said that the French mistook the women in their red cloaks for soldiers, and thought well to surrender at once, believing themselves to have a British army upon them. But the Welshmen have had many a better chance of showing how they make good soldiers. There is a Welsh regiment with which a goat marches as its living crest, goats being sometimes the cattle that best find pasture on the stony hills of Wales.

The island of Great Britain is made up of those three countries, England, Scotland, and Wales; to which the adjacent Ireland is joined as part of the United Kingdom.

IV

IRELAND

To the west of England lies green Ireland — the "Emerald Isle," as its poets call it—which is kept only too green by more than its fair share of rain. Most of our wet weather comes to us from the west over the Atlantic; then Ireland, standing in the way of the clouds, catches their first downpour as they pass on to break next upon the mountains of Wales and the English Lake Country. These mountains, again, draw off a great deal of the wet before it can reach the flatter east side, which thus comes to be the driest part of Britain. In some parts of Cumberland, for instance, three or four times as much rain, or more, fall through the year as in Norfolk or about London.

So we see why Ireland is a wet country, especially towards the west coast, exposed to the Atlantic storms. Some parts have sucked in so much moisture as to be turned to bogs—patches of rotten soil and decayed vegetation, good for nothing except to be dug up and dried into peat, which here is much used instead of coal. There are bogs in England, too, and more in the Highlands of Scotland, but they are commoner and larger on the rainy plains and mountain-sides of Ireland. In some parts little grows well but potatoes, which have come to be the chief food of the country, though when they were first brought over from America it was hard

to persuade people to have anything to do with such an outlandish vegetable, which now they cannot do without; and when the potatoes go bad, as happens in some seasons, the Irish suffer terribly from famine.

Poor as their country is, the people love it all the more, and never forget it wherever they go. Like the Scots, many of them have been driven to seek a livelihood in other lands, by choice in the United States of America, where they prosper better than at home. The Irish are not willing to forget that they were conquered by the English, who used them badly enough in old days, but now would be glad to make friends with them and give them fair play. Too many Irishmen try to keep up their old grudges against England, and to blame its Government for the poverty of their country. Yet this seems to be partly their own fault, since the most prosperous part of Ireland is the north, which was mainly settled by Englishmen and Scotsmen, who have proved better able to help themselves and to make the best of what can't be helped.

At this end stands Belfast, the most flourishing place of business and manufacture. Further down the coast comes the capital, Dublin, near its beautiful bay. The third city is Cork, at the head of its Cove, that makes a fine natural harbour. Nearly all the great towns of Ireland are seaports, on some arm of the sea or some river opening into it. In old days, when ships were small, ports were generally a little way up some river, where a vessel could lie sheltered from storms and safer

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from attacks of enemies. But nowadays our great ships and steamers need deep water to float in, so harbours are more often made on the sea, fenced in by break-waters to keep out the stormy waves, and opening into artificial docks, in which the biggest craft can lie to be unloaded or repaired.

While Ireland has too many bogs and barren moors, it also contains some of the beauty-spots of the kingdom, such as the famous Lakes of Killarney and the lovely Wicklow Hills, near Dublin. Most of the coast-line is very grand and picturesque, cut into rocky bays and deep loughs, upon which for ages have been storming the winds and waves of the Atlantic, here and there cutting off the land into weather-beaten islands. On the west side come cliffs loftier than any in Britain. On the north the best-known point is that curious freak of Nature named the Giant's Causeway. The rocks here have the appearance of being broken pillars of some ruined building, or of the foundation of a road running into the sea. In the Island of Staffa, on the opposite shore of Scotland, the same formation is found in a grander style, the pillars rising like organ-pipes about the front of Fingal's Cave, into which the waves rush with a thundering noise. These strange shapes are due to some violent convulsion of the earth ages ago, but the country-people make them out the work of a giant called Fingal. There are two giants, indeed, in the story—an Irish and a Scottish one—of whom it is told that they would cross the sea to play tricks on

one another. Then the Irish giant always got the best of it, according to his own countrymen; but the tale as told in Scotland turns out, of course, quite the other way.

As St. George is the patron saint of England, and St. Andrew of Scotland, Ireland's is St. Patrick. Many Irishmen have been christened after him, so that Pat has come to be the national nickname, as a Scotsman is Sandy, a Welshman Taffy, from the name of his St. David, an Englishman Jack or John Bull. All four of them have been too fond of passing off on one another nicknames, jests, and sly stories, by which they try to make out their neighbours not so clever or so honest as themselves. But now, seeing so much of each other, they should come to know one another better, which is the best way of making friends together, as ought to be the people of one great country.

V

FRANCE

At the Straits of Dover, we have only to cross twenty miles of sea to find ourselves in France, which we should soon see to be a foreign country. Everything here is different—the houses, the fields, the dress of the people, their language, their looks, their manners and customs, the laws and government under which they live. All their ways of life they are apt to like better than ours,

just as we prefer what we are accustomed to. We fondly speak of "Old England" as the best of countries; so the French think there is no land like *La belle France*—"fair France," as they love to call it—and Paris, its capital, they declare to be the finest city in the world, if not the largest. It is only natural to grow up loving one's motherland above all others.

The first difference that would strike an Englishman is that everybody here speaks French, which he cannot understand without a great deal of learning, whereas in France it comes natural to the smallest children to cry out "*Bonbons*" when they want sweets, and "*S'il vous plaît*" when they are told to say "if you please." French is one of several languages that came from Latin, as variously pronounced among peoples conquered by the Romans in this southern corner of Europe. English, though a good deal of a mixture, like our race, comes mainly from the tongue of the Saxon warriors, who made themselves more at home in England than did the Romans.

Nearly everyone in France knows French more or less well, yet in each corner of the country other languages are still spoken. In the north-west of France live the Bretons, whose native speech was once the same as that of our Britons, still spoken by the Welsh. In the north-east corner France had a good many Germans within her bounds, till most of them were taken away after her last great war with Germany. In the south-

east corner some of the people are more Italian than French ; and the same may be said of the Corsicans on their large island in the Mediterranean, which belongs to France. Lastly, in the south-west corner, on the Bay of Biscay, live an ancient people called the Basques, who have a language of their own that seems to stand apart from all others in Europe.

England is a kingdom, but France is a republic, with a President chosen for seven years to be its highest ruler. The old kings of France had governed so ill that more than a hundred years ago their subjects rose against them, then soon fell to angry quarrelling and bloodshed. The troubles of this Revolution, as it is called, were ended by General Napoleon Buonaparte, who, pretending to be the champion of freedom, made himself master of France under the title of Emperor. Then, instead of using his power to make the country strong and prosperous, he led the French into costly wars with almost every country in Europe, till, when more than a million of men had been killed through his restless ambition, he was finally overthrown at the great battle of Waterloo, and sent to the distant island of St. Helena to be kept out of the way of doing more mischief. After his downfall the French had still a good deal of trouble from revolutions ; but now they have been able to settle down peaceably as a republic, where every man should have the same voice in the government.

One difference between French and English laws is

that in France a man is not so free to leave his property as he pleases, but must divide it among his children. This leads to the splitting up of great farms into smaller holdings, which gives quite a different look to the country, all covered with patches of various crops, not so often divided by the hedgerows that are a chief beauty of England. More people in France live by working on the land, and fewer by manufacturing industries; although France also has coal-mines and factory chimneys in some districts. A greater variety of crops will grow here than in England, for even an Englishman has to confess that France, if colder in winter, gets more sun and clearer skies than we see in our cloudy and foggy island. The farther one goes from the sea, the more the climate is apt to run to cold and heat in their turn, with fewer changes than come to us with the shifting winds of the ocean.

A famous product of France is wine, made from grapes that ripen freely in open vineyards, while in England they have to be sheltered under glass; for though the vine can stand hard frosts, it needs a warm sun to bring it to its best. Another thing made in France is silk, spun out of the silkworms fed upon mulberry leaves, much grown here for this purpose. In the south grow olives, chestnuts, oranges and such sun-loving fruits, which we see first in shops. Normandy is celebrated for its apples, made into cider, as in England. Besides the grains, vegetables, and grasses familiar in our country, France has others not so

common with us, such as beetroot, from which sugar is made in large quantities.

France is a larger country than England, and more regular in shape, but it has not so many inhabitants in proportion to its size. In the centre of it are wide open plains, through which flow great rivers, the Rhone, the Garonne, the Loire, the Seine, and others, that to Frenchmen seem more beautiful than our Thames or Tay. On these navigable rivers have grown up the chief cities, Paris, Lyons, Orleans, Bordeaux, and, near the mouth of the Rhone, Marseilles, the famous port of the Mediterranean.

France has also great mountains, especially on the western and southern sides. From Spain she is separated by the Pyrenees, a line of snowy crests often two or three times as high as any mountain in Britain. Towards Italy and Switzerland rise the still higher Alps, one of which, Mont Blanc, mostly belonging to France, is the loftiest point in Europe. On the borders farther north come lower chains called the Jura, the Vosges and the Ardennes; and here and there in the interior the land swells up into high masses, such as the bare mountain cones of Auvergne, that long ago burned themselves out as flaming volcanoes.

There is more sameness in French lowland scenery, the well-cultivated ground covered by a patchwork of crops, through which run straight roads and rows of tall trees; but some regions here have a peculiar character. The western Brittany is a land of windy

moors and wet hills, edged by a rocky coast, like our opposite promontory of Cornwall, inhabited, too, by a kindred Breton race, and dotted by similar ancient monuments. On the southern part of the Atlantic coast, the *Landes* of Gascony are a stretch of sandy heaths and pools, ruined by the sea and its sand blown inland, till pine-woods and broom were planted to anchor down the shifting sandhills of the low shore; and still much of the ground is so swampy that shepherds may be seen stalking after their flocks upon high stilts, so that from a distance they look like long-legged giants. On the other side of the country, about the mouth of the Rhone, the fields have become unwholesome marshes, of which salt is the best crop. But not far from this begins the Riviera coast, between the Alps and the Mediterranean, which is one of the most beautiful parts of France, certainly the best known to us now that so many English people escape to this sunny shore from their own dull and damp winter.

In bad old days, when to be neighbours meant to be enemies, England and France were often at war. It is not so long ago that our kings gave up pretending to be the sovereigns of France also, on the score of having half conquered it in great battles of the Middle Ages. One of the most romantic stories in French history is that of Joan d'Arc, called the Maid of Orleans, a simple country girl who believed herself to have a mission from Heaven to deliver her country from the English invaders. Dressed like a soldier, she led an

army to the relief of Orleans, one of the great cities of Central France, hotly besieged by the English. The enthusiastic courage of this girl-leader put such fresh spirit into her followers that they were able to drive back the enemy; and the triumphant Joan cleared the way to get the French king crowned at Rheims, a city of the north, whose cathedral was to those kings what Westminster Abbey is to ours. But there were traitors as well as patriots in France; and the brave Maid, being taken prisoner, was shamefully sold to the English, who cruelly had her burned as a sorceress at Rouen, the chief city of Normandy, then in their hands.

Still a good deal of ill-feeling is kept up by foolish and thoughtless people on each side of the Channel. But such hatreds are happily beginning to die out, and should vanish all the faster as the two nations come to see more of each other, to understand one another's good points, and to know how both countries are better off for living peaceably as friends, instead of wasting their strength in the barbarous business of warfare.

VI

HOLLAND AND BELGIUM

THESE two countries, now separate kingdoms, used to be known as the Netherlands or Lowlands, as well they might be, for a great part of them makes the lowest land in Europe, much of Holland lying actually lower

than the sea. What is now firm ground here was once a wilderness of islands and marshes, formed by the sand and mud which great rivers like the Rhine sweep down from the mountains of Central Europe. By-and-by those bare islands rose high enough above the water to be skinned over with plants ; then the patient industry of the people turned them into green flats, dotted with towns and villages, and seamed with ditches and canals that carry off the water. 1504

But still their fields are often in danger of being swamped by high tides, so the Dutchmen, as we call the Hollanders, have had to fortify the low edges of their country by raising strong dykes or embankments to keep out the sea, which sometimes makes a barrier for itself by piling up sandhills on the shore. A common sight on these embankments is windmills or tall steam-engines, by which the country has to be pumped clear when too much water gets into it. Our Fen Country and parts of the east coast of England, once also wet and unwholesome flats, were drained for us with the help of Dutchmen, who naturally understand a kind of work but for which their own land would be drowned from year to year.

Thanks to their diligence and watchfulness, Holland is now an expanse of meadows, fields, and flower-gardens, for the Dutch are very fond of gardening. They are also noted for their love of cleanliness ; it seems as if a Dutch housewife would never be done with washing up her home ; and even the cow-houses

are kept remarkable tidy. There can be no want of water in such a country, for one never goes far without being brought up by a canal or a sluggish stream, their banks often lined with trees. These waterways are as good as roads, for boats, ships, and steamers ply upon them in summer ; and when they become frozen over for weeks and months together, the whole Dutch people take to their skates, as we do to umbrellas. Skating is more than an amusement in Holland, where men may be seen skating to work, women to market, and children to school ; then, if there be any wind, they sometimes hoist little sails or spread out their coats to let themselves be blown along the ice.

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other great towns of Holland, are as watery as the fields, with canals and bridges for streets, in which the houses have often to be built on piles as a foundation. Ships may be seen moored among trees and chimneys, their yards poking almost into the windows. The Dutch are notable sailors, who carry on trade with all countries, especially with their own rich colonies in the East Indies. There was a time when they sometimes beat our men-of-war at sea, but nowadays their ships are chiefly concerned with peaceful commerce.

The Netherland folk, to be sure, have shown how they could fight as well as trade. In former days their country belonged to the kings of Spain, by whom they were treated so badly that this people of fishermen, farmers, and merchants rose in rebellion against what

was then the greatest power in Europe. After a long struggle they won their independence, which they had much ado to keep against France and Germany, as well as Spain. More than once, when they were almost overcome by their enemies, they defended themselves by letting in the water through their dykes and turning their fields into a lake, determined rather to ruin the country than let it be conquered by oppressors. Among the chief heroes of these wars were the Princes of Orange, one of whom became King of England.

This stout-hearted people have all they can do to fight with the sea, which sometimes has broken through their embankments, flooding the flat country far and wide; but always it was driven back, and the mischief it had worked set right again. The Dutch go on winning more land from the waves—for instance, near the town of Haarlem, where a great bay has been drained so as to make a fertile space as large as an English county. The north of Holland is hollowed out by a much larger gulf, called the Zuider Zee, shut in by sandy spits and islands, and all this shallow sea it is hoped some day to turn into dry land. The nearest part to England is the province well named Zeeland (Sealand), a cluster of low islands, among which the wandering channels of the Rhine mingle with those of the Meuse and the Scheldt.

In all Holland one can hardly see a mountain, hardly a hill, unless where a long ridge of sandy heaths and pines runs across between Holland and Belgium. But

Belgium, beginning with the same flat plains, rises up on the south and east to picturesque wooded highlands, called the Ardennes. This country has an advantage also in coal-mines, that make some parts busy with factories and iron-works. Though not quite so large as Holland, Belgium has more people; indeed, its manufacturing districts are among the most thickly populated in Europe. In the Middle Ages, long before England took to such industry, Flanders and Brabant, now provinces of Belgium, were famous for cloth-working, that made this the richest part of Europe, with flourishing towns then as common as villages in other countries.

Some of those old towns still flourish, like Ghent and Bruges, though not so well as when they were larger and richer than London; but many have been ruined through changes of trade, or by the battles which stronger nations were too much in the way of fighting on the flat plains of poor Belgium, so that it got "the battlefield of Europe" for a nickname. The last great battle here, and the most famous, was Waterloo, where Napoleon came to be finally overthrown by the British and German armies. The Belgians themselves, in modern times, have been more given to working than fighting, which is all the better for their prosperity. Even their dogs are trained to work; so here it is not uncommon to see a big dog harnessed in a milk-cart.

Brussels is the capital, another famous old city; and the largest port is Antwerp, which seems growing to be

one of the greatest harbours in the world, though it lies a good way from the sea, up the crooked and muddy estuary of a river. In the highland region a famous place is Spa, to which so many visitors used to come from England and other countries to drink its mineral waters that a *spa* became our name for all such resorts. The Belgian town best known to strangers now is perhaps Ostend, a sea-bathing place of European celebrity, lying almost opposite Margate.

Belgium is a country, but the Belgians can hardly be called a nation. They are chiefly made up of two kinds of people, the Flemings and the Walloons, speaking different languages, which few foreigners care to learn. French, however, is the speech of the better class ; and in the towns one finds everything much the same as in France. But the people of Holland are more like the Germans, their language being a dialect of German ; and the name Dutch, which we give to the Hollanders, is really that by which all Germans know themselves.

VII

GERMANY

THERE are men still alive who can remember when there was hardly such a country as Germany, but rather a great people speaking the language we call German, though their own name for it is *Dutch.* This nation was divided into several kingdoms, such as Prussia, the

largest of all, Saxony, Bavaria, Hanover, along with smaller States entitled Grand-Duchies, Electorates and Principalities, some of them so small that one could pass through half a dozen in a day's walk. As King of Hanover, our own Sovereign was also a German prince till Queen Victoria came to the throne of England; then the laws of Hanover would not allow a woman to inherit that kingdom. In the middle of her reign the German States joined together to defeat France in a terrible war, after which they united themselves into an empire, with the King of Prussia as its head under the title of Kaiser, and his chief city, Berlin, as capital. Kaiser means Cæsar or Emperor, which is as much as to say King of kings. Most of the States still keep their own kings, princes and parliaments; but they are joined into one empire, as England, Scotland and Ireland make one United Kingdom, whose own Sovereign is also entitled Emperor, as ruling over all the princes of India.

Germany now takes its place as one of the great Powers of Europe—a larger country than France or England, and with more people in it. Nor does the German Empire hold all the Germans, who spread over into neighbouring countries, many belonging to Austria and Switzerland. Many have also emigrated to America; and Germany has begun to make colonies for itself in Africa and the South Seas, following the example of Britain, which the new empire lays itself out to rival as a manufacturing and trading nation.

This rivalry has stirred up a good deal of ill-feeling

between England and Germany, which seems all the more pity, as the two nations ought to think of themselves as cousins. Our mixed population is connected with other nations of Europe, but most closely with Germany, by our language, coming down to us, as it does, mainly from those Saxon invaders who made the strongest strain of the English people. The speech they brought with them into England has since then changed a good deal in both countries; but still many of their common words are much the same, *father*, *son*, *house*, *garden*, *good*, *bread*, *butter*, and so forth, differing only slightly in spelling and pronunciation. This likeness is best recognized when we hear German spoken, especially in talking of common things, with no long and learned words to come in. What scares us in learning German is the heavy, uncouth letters in which German books are still printed, whereas other nations have long ago taken to a simpler and easier style of writing and printing.

To tell the truth, the Germans are more diligent at learning English than we are at learning German. For a long time now this people have set an example of schooling to all Europe. Every German boy or girl has to go to school; and in the higher schools English is so carefully taught that one often finds Germans speaking it quite readily without ever having left their own country. If German youngsters are better at lessons than ours, they are not so keen about games. Few of them know cricket and football; and their favourite

amusement seems to be playing at soldiers. That is a thing they need to learn in real earnest, for Germany has had to fight against enemies besetting its borders on every side, only on the north defended by the sea, that guards our islands all round. Every German has to serve in the army or navy for a time, and then hold himself ready to do his part in defending the country.

And this is a fine country, well worth fighting for, full of noble old cities, thriving towns and snug villages, among its picturesque hills and river valleys, or dotting open plains that have been made fertile by German industry. The south side rises to the Alps and other mountain ranges, from which flow the great rivers, first winding and crooking through lower highlands, then in the north creeping more slowly over a flat country, fringed by sandy dry heaths and pine-woods on the Baltic coast, much of it broken up into islands, sand-hills, and spits of sand, where the ground is often so low that it has to be fenced in against the sea by embankments, as in Holland. Beautiful parts of Germany are its stretches of wooded hills called forests, such as the Black Forest, the Harz Mountains, and the Thuringian Forest; most beautiful of all is perhaps the mountain and lake country on the southern border, where Germany adjoins Austria and Switzerland.

Through the large Lake of Constance at this end flows the Rhine, the most famous of German rivers, though it neither begins nor ends in Germany. On the border of Switzerland, at Schaffhausen, it rushes over the

foaming Falls of the Rhine, then bends round the wooded hills of the Black Forest, to turn northwards by the old cities of Basle and Strasburg. The most picturesque part of its course is from Mentz to Bonn, a day's journey by steamboats, crowded with sight-seers in summer. Here it flows between slopes green with woods, orchards, and vineyards, and under rocky crags often topped by ruined castles, each having its romantic story. One such ruin on a little island, for instance, is called the Mouse Tower, from a legend that here the cruel Bishop Hatto in vain took refuge from a host of mice following him everywhere as a punishment for his hard-heartedness to the starving poor. At Coblentz the Rhine is joined by the Moselle, whose valley shows the same fine scenery. Above Bonn it passes a group of hills, famed as the Seven Mountains, one of them called the *Drachenfels* (Dragon-rock), from another wonderful tale of a dragon that guarded a treasure and was slain by the hero Siegfried, a name known in Germany as King Arthur's or Robin Hood's in Britain.

Below Bonn the river's course becomes less romantic. It rolls by the great city of Cologne, over which rises a noble cathedral, with the highest spire in Europe. Further down it flows near a German "Black Country," darkened by the smoke of iron-works and other industries. Then this mighty river, that poured so eagerly from the Swiss Alps, crawls, as if tired and lazy, on to the flats of Holland, where it has hardly strength enough left to make its way into the sea by

several shallow mouths. Its finest sight here is the gardens of tulips and other flowers cultivated by Dutch gardeners. Another spectacle often seen on the river is huge rafts of timber, with little floating villages built on them, drifting down the current from the mountains on which they were hewn, to be at last broken up on the lowlands, where gardens and grass meadows are more common than forests.

Germany has many famous cities, some of which were independent in the old days when it was divided into different States. Such were the free towns of Frankfurt-on-the-Main, which used to count as the chief city ; and Hamburg, the great port at the mouth of the Elbe, the principal river of Central Germany. Nuremburg, in Bavaria, is celebrated for having kept so many of its picturesque old buildings that it makes a show for travellers. Munich and Dresden, the capitals of Bavaria and Saxony, are notable for their fine buildings and collections of art, as for the beautiful mountain scenery near them. The largest place in Saxony is the commercial city of Leipsic ; and part of this kingdom has so many manufactures that it is the best-populated district of Germany. Lubeck, Stettin and Dantzic are famous old ports of the Baltic. Breslau is the chief city of Silesia in the south-east, which used to belong to Austria. Strasburg is capital of the Rhine province, Alsace, at one time conquered by France, but taken back by Germany in the great war that made her a united empire.

VIII

THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

To the north of Germany the Baltic Sea is enclosed by two long promontories, with a group of islands lying like stepping-stones between them. This is the Scandinavian land, home of the Norse pirates, once so feared all over Europe. Those bold Northmen of old days came sailing across the stormy North Sea in fleets of what were little better than open boats, landing here and there to kill and rob, sometimes to settle down as masters. Their most important conquest was the part of France called from them Normandy, whence, again, their descendants crossed the Channel to conquer England. Before the Norman Conquest England had already been half overrun by another race of robbers from the Baltic, the Danes, who gave King Alfred so much trouble. Other Norsemen swarmed down upon the islands of Scotland and upon Ireland. Some pushed their raids as far as Iceland and Greenland, and even to America, it is believed, centuries before it was made known by Columbus. Some found their way into the Mediterranean ; and wherever they went they seemed like fierce giants, the very sight of their dragon-beaked ships setting the poor people to flight as before lions or wolves. Thus the Norsemen came to be scattered far and wide ; but those of them left in their old home have settled quietly down in three kingdoms—Denmark,

Norway, and Sweden—which sometimes were joined as one, then, again, split off into separate countries.

Denmark is the smallest of the three, a country made up of the Jutland Peninsula and of several islands, on one of which stands the capital, Copenhagen. The whole population is about half that of London. But the Danes are a sturdy and industrious folk, who make the best of their rather wet and flat land, rearing cattle, and turning out a great deal of butter to send to England and elsewhere. Denmark and Britain should be good friends now, whatever they may have been in the past, for our Queen was a Danish princess. Another thing we have to thank Denmark for is the stories of Hans Christian Andersen, as well known among us as those of Grimm, that come from Germany.

Though Denmark is so small, she has colonies, as England has, much larger than herself. The most important is Iceland, an island in which volcanic fires and spouts of boiling water, called *Geysers*, break out through snow and ice. A still larger Danish island, one of the largest in the world, is Greenland, in the far north of America; but this is so ice-bound most of the year that only a few Danes live on its coast among the stunted Esquimaux natives, who in summer are bold and active fishermen, but have to spend the long dark winter in dirty smoky dens, keeping themselves as fat as they can upon oil and blubber. Yet Greenland seems once to have had a warmer climate, to make its name not such a mockery. The south of it lies oppo-

site the north of Scotland ; and our islands would be as cold in winter but for a current of warm water, called the Gulf Stream, that wraps us all round.

Norway, on the west side, and Sweden, on the east, together make up the long Scandinavian Peninsula that, like Greenland, runs up into the Arctic Circle, where winter lasts most of the year. In the depth of winter the sun never rises on this end of the world, left dark night and day for months together, lit only by a cold moon and frosty stars, or often by the glow of the aurora borealis, shining far more brilliantly than it does now and then in our sky. Then, at midsummer, in turn, the sun keeps always in sight, and for three months there is no night over the Arctic Sea. Even in our own islands, the further north we go we find the darkness longer in winter and shorter in summer, so that in the north of Scotland one can read up to the middle of a summer night, where at Christmas-time the lamps will have to be lit an hour sooner than in London. The North Cape is Norway's furthest point, sought out by tourists to see that strange appearance of the sun at midnight. All the Norwegian coast is very beautiful, with its deep fiords winding in between the snow-capped mountains and its countless rocky islands, among which steamers carry sight-seers from all parts of Europe.

Most tourists, to be sure, see only the fine-weather looks of this country, unless when its views are spoilt by rain, as too often is the case. It is very different through the dark cold winter, when the people make

themselves as snug as they can in their wooden houses, or travel over the snow-fields on a sort of long wooden skates, called ski (pronounced as *she*). Many of them, like their ancestors, go sailing out into the world from their bays and river-mouth harbours, no more as pirates, but as traders and fishermen. The chief city is Christiania, on a southern inlet, where the King lives with his English Queen. Nearly all the towns are on the coast, for inland the ground swells up into rocky and snowy mountains, the highest part of which was once believed to be a home of giants.

The great central mountain ridge parts Norway from Sweden, which is the largest and the best populated of the three Baltic countries, with Stockholm for its capital. This city, built upon wooded islands, is one of the most beautiful in Europe. Much of Sweden, also, is cold mountain and dark forest, from which we get iron ore and timber, a good deal of the latter in the form of matches, made here to be sent all over the world. Another thing that comes from Swedish forests is paper, now cheaply made by machinery out of wood-pulp, so that our newspapers may not long ago have been part of a tree in this country. Some of the ports, both in Norway and Sweden, show nothing but wood—brightly painted wooden houses, like the toy-villages of our nurseries; the wharves heaped with wood piles to be loaded into ships, and the harbour half choked up with trunks and logs that have been floated down from the hills by river or canal. The worst of such a town

is that it has a good chance of being destroyed when once a fire gets started among so much wood, that in hot weather burns up like a giant's box of matches.

The southern part of Sweden has stretches of fertile plain on which open large lakes. From one lake to the other leads a canal, like the Caledonian Canal of Scotland, and thus steamboats can pass right across the country from Stockholm to Gothenburg, the chief city on the western coast. Beside this waterway are the famous Trollhatta Falls, where the steamers take two or three hours in going up and down a sort of ladder of locks, by which the canal drops to a lower level. The streams of hilly regions, of course, dash down so quickly over rapids and waterfalls that they are seldom of use for navigation unless they can be turned into canals, on which vessels may pass smoothly and be let down safely by means of locks such as we see on some of our own rivers.

Gothenburg lies opposite the north end of Denmark; and, further down, the two countries are separated only by the Sound, a strait so narrow that, when frozen in winter, people can walk across it in an hour or two. The water in the Baltic being shallow, and not so salt as our seas, freezes more easily in the hard winters. The long Gulf of Bothnia that runs up between Sweden and Russia has often been frozen over so firmly that an army could march across to invade the opposite country. Nowadays, when fighting has become ruinously expensive, Sweden is not much able to make war on her

neighbours, but in former times the brave Swedish soldiers won battles over half Europe, first under the famous King, Gustavus Adolphus, "Lion of the North," then under Charles XII., who, before he was out of his teens, began to show himself one of the greatest generals of his day.

The far north both of Norway and Sweden joins Russia in Lapland, a barren country where trees dwindle down to shrubs and mosses, and the summer lasts only a few weeks, not long enough to ripen corn. It is thinly inhabited by bands of Lapps, a stunted, ugly, and harmless people, who wander from place to place with herds of reindeer. These hardy animals are to them more than cows or horses to us; and the Lapps would find it difficult to live without the reindeer, whose milk makes butter and cheese, its flesh gives them meat, its skin is turned into clothes and tents, and it is trained to drag their sledges over the wintry wastes of ice and snow. To the south of Lapland, on the Baltic coast, comes Finland, a country of lakes and woods, that once belonged to Sweden, but was conquered by Russia.

IX

SWITZERLAND

It is not only in the far North that snow and ice can be seen all the year round. The higher we rise towards the clouds, the colder and clearer grows the air; then

we have not far to go up a mountain to find the rain turning to snow at any season. On Ben Nevis, the highest British mountain, about 4,000 feet above the sea, patches or snow lie even in summer ; and if this were two or three times as high, the air at the top would be so freezingly cold that the snow could never melt. Even near the Equator, mountains three or four times the height of Ben Nevis are capped with snow and ice, seen far off, from the hot plains below, by naked people who know not what a slide is, and never had a chance of making snowballs.

The highest mountains in Europe are the Alps, that gather into a great knot in and about the country called Switzerland, over which stand up dozens of peaks always covered with snow as our hills may be for part of the year. Where the snow keeps on falling and never melting, we might suppose it would pile up higher and higher till it reached the clouds. But the Swiss mountains and other lofty heights get rid of their load of snow in two ways, both of them unknown in our country.

The first is the snow-falls called *avalanches*, which often do terrible destruction in the Alps. As the sun grows stronger after the sharp winter cold, its rays and the warm spring winds go on softening a sheet of frozen snow till this becomes so loose as to be easily set slipping down the steep mountain-side. Once started, the avalanche gathers like a giant's snowball, rushes on with a noise like thunder, hurling rocks along with it, breaking

down trees before it, and pouring into the valleys like a waterfall of snow. Houses and villages are often overwhelmed thus, and hundreds of people have sometimes lost their lives, perhaps buried deep in snow while they slept, never again to see the sun ; but there are stories of families who managed to live under the snow for days, till they were lucky enough to be dug out by their neighbours. Some avalanches are mere snow-slips ; some are storms of dry powdery snow whirled away by a hurricane wind ; or it may be a torrent of loosened ice or stones that comes crashing down to the lower slopes.

Then, again, the high snow-fields are regularly drained by ice-rivers called *glaciers*, found only in cold regions like the upper Alps. The glaciers look, indeed, like frozen rivers ; but they are always in motion, so slow that one might watch them all day without seeing that the ice had advanced an inch ; and in a man's lifetime it will have crept only a few miles down the mountain hollows. From above, a glacier may appear almost smooth ice, streaked, spotted, and coated with candied snow ; but when one gets on to the surface, it will be found roughened by peaks, ridges, furrows, clefts, and bristling points, here and there broken into waves of ice, or rising in a tall pillar like a waterspout ; often cracked across by deep fissures called crevasses, while lengthwise stretch piled-up *moraines*, banks of rubbish and rocks of all sizes, from a marble to a haystack, that have tumbled from the crags above, to lie in stripes looking from far off like railway-lines.

Travelling slowly but surely, the ice at last comes low enough to melt in the sun. The hidden cracks and tunnels of the glacier are already full of water, trickling down to its hollow snout to pour out in a dirty stream, soon swollen by others, as it dashes on to the lower valleys. This is the source of many famous rivers—the Rhine and the Rhone, for instance, which rise not far from each other in the Swiss Alps, to take so different courses, one through Germany to the North Sea, the other through France to the Mediterranean. Sometimes such rivers open out on wide plains into the lakes that are another beauty of Switzerland, as are also the waterfalls and cascades over which the streams often fling themselves in their haste to reach the sea.

It is only in modern times that men have ventured to climb the highest Swiss mountains, many of them so steep and rough that getting up to their tops might seem impossible. The first persons who climbed the highest of the Alps, Mont Blanc, were looked on as mad by the country-folk. Since then other adventurers, among whom Englishmen long took the lead, have shown the way up most of the Alpine peaks, where every year, indeed, some rash or unlucky climbers meet their death, or suffer terrible hardships, caught in a snow-storm, perhaps, swept off their feet by an avalanche, or put in danger of being crushed by falling stones.

For such perilous ascents men go in parties of three or four, or more, tied to each other by ropes in case of a slip, sometimes cutting steps for themselves on a wall of

ice, sometimes crawling along a slippery edge of rocks, then toiling up long slopes of snow, so bright in the sun that the glare may blind their eyes. But if, at last, the climbers can reach the lonely summit, all their dangers and hardships are forgotten in the glory of standing so high above the common world, and looking over a sea of mountains and valleys stretched into two or three countries of Europe.

It is not everyone who can trust himself up the high Alps. Better known are the passes, by which roads find their way between the peaks. Some famous Swiss roads, that used to be the only way from Switzerland to Italy, are higher than any English mountain, and travelling by them, especially in winter, would never be without danger. Near the top were built hospitals, in which lived pious monks devoted to the duty of sheltering and helping travellers. The highest pass, twice as high as Ben Nevis, is that of St. Bernard, which gave its name to the well-known breed of big dogs trained by the monks here to seek out travellers lost in the snow. One of these good dogs is said to have saved forty people in the course of its life, which unfortunately ended by a man killing it, perhaps mistaken for a wolf, as it sprang through the snow to his rescue.

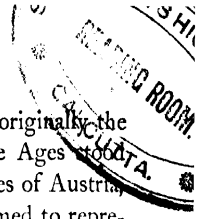
Nowadays such services are not so much needed, since the passes will not often be crossed, unless in summer. At several points railways have been tunnelled under the Alps, and carried in winding curves along their steep sides, so that travellers pass in an hour what

once gave them days of hard travelling. And it is not only underneath the Alps that engines push their way. Up some of the mountains railways have been laid, by which one can be carried to the top for a panorama of grand views, grandest at sunrise, but most beautiful at sunset, when sometimes a long line of snow peaks stands up in a rosy flush known as the Alpine glow.

Switzerland, one of the smallest European countries, is the best known and the most visited by strangers, for the sake of its magnificent scenery and healthy mountain air. It has been nicknamed "The Playground of Europe." All the summer its hotels are crowded with foreigners, who more and more take to visiting it also in winter, when the sharp cold is not so much felt in its still air under a clear, bright sky, and one can sit out or doors where water would freeze almost at once. But this is not weather for sitting long, in which one rather keeps oneself warm by tobogganing down the slippery slopes, or skating on lakes frozen hard for months together, or stalking across the snow on the long skates called *ski*, which have been introduced here from Norway and Sweden.

Such amusements are mostly for idle strangers. The Swiss have enough to do in getting a living out of their rugged country. This people can hardly be called a nation, but rather odds and ends of different nations mixed up together. The most of them speak German, but some French, some Italian, and some few, in one corner, still keep a dialect of their own, corrupted from Latin. The

Switzerland



Switzers, or Swiss, as we call them, were originally the people of one district, who in the Middle Ages stood up for their independence against the Dukes of Austria, chief princes of the old Empire that claimed to represent the Roman dominion over Europe. The story is well known how Gessler, a tyrannous deputy of Austria, was defied by the bold archer, William Tell. This cruel lord ordered him to shoot an apple off the head of his son. The boy stood so still, and the father's aim was so true, that his arrow hit the mark; but he had another bolt ready to put into his crossbow, with which, he confessed, he would have shot the tyrant had his son come to any harm. Later on, it is said, he did shoot Gessler, and became the hero of a revolt by which his neighbours drove the proud Austrians out of their country. Much the same story is told of other heroes in different parts of the world; and this seems to be only a story, it being doubtful if such a person as Tell ever lived. But it is certain that Switzerland had many sons of the same bold temper, able to win liberty from their oppressors; then neighbouring districts, *cantons*, as they are called, joined to form a Swiss republic, that has held its mountainous land like a castle through five hundred years of wars and conquest troubling the countries around it.

In the open valleys of Switzerland, and on its beautiful lakes, have sprung up great cities: Berne, the capital of the republic, but Zurich the largest, and Geneva the most famous of them. In these cities and in other popu-

lous districts flourish notable industries, such as watch-making; and the silk and cotton manufactures of Switzerland are likely to increase now that machinery is worked not only by steam-power, but by electricity. Steam needs fuel like coal, in which Switzerland is poor, but she is rich in the rushing streams that can be harnessed to grind out electric power for the use of man. Crops and fruit grow in the valleys, tilled by laborious hands that have had to make the best of the poorest soil. Higher up the mountains stretch woods that are felled and sent floating down the rivers, to be turned into houses, ships, and furniture far away. Then, at the height of our highest English mountains, come the open pastures that are the dairy-ground of the lower Alps.

At the beginning of summer, the cows, decked with flowers and jingling bells, are driven up to feed on those mountain meadows, often under the charge of dairy-maids and lads, who spend the fine season in lonely huts or stables, too busy looking after their herds and making butter and cheese to mind a hard life, in which their only luxury is plenty of milk and bracing air. They have the grandest of scenery about them, if they cared for that; and, if fond of flowers, they find beds of wild Alpine roses blooming beside the snow; and slopes gay with narcissus bells and blue gentian; and high up among the rocks the white edelweiss, which it is a bold lad's pride to bring down as a gift for his sweetheart, won on perilous steeps by help of a firm foot and a steady eye. The women and girls, too, have

to be firm-footed, who sometimes may be seen carrying great loads of hay cut upon slippery edges where not every English haymaker would care to trust himself.

Higher up come rougher and rockier pastures, on which sheep can feed, or sometimes they are only fit for nimble goats. Some of the most celebrated men in Switzerland tell how they began life as little goatherds, employed to drive a troublesome flock from the village or farm below to their mountain feeding-ground. The goatherd has a hard life of it, up and out early in all weathers, his bare feet hardened by cuts and bruises which he must mind as little as heat and cold, obliged to trot at the heels of the obstinate and tricksy creatures, that delight to go every way but the right one, and by all his shouting, thumping, and throwing stones are hardly to be kept from breaking into some garden or meadow, where for any mischief they do the blame will fall on his shoulders. Once he has them on the open mountain-side, settled down to browzing on scrubby bushes and patches of thin grass, he has time to look about him, and to pick for himself red or blue berries to help out his dinner of coarse bread and hard cheese. But always he must keep an eye on his goats, that sometimes stupidly stray on to steep places where they stick fast, and their young keeper may have to climb after them at the risk of being dashed to pieces.

Nor is it all sunshine in the Alpine summer. Often for hours the boy will be glad to crouch, shivering, beneath a rock that only half shelters him from rain or

snow ; and he cannot even try to keep himself snug if perhaps a storm of wind sends the goats scurrying before it for miles, with their keeper after them till he is out of breath. He must be thankful when, at the end of the day, he can count his flock, to find them all safe and sound. As he drives them down in the twilight, the sound of his horn gives notice that they are coming ; then, as the long straggling line trots through the village, each goat knows where to turn off for its own stable.

Wild goats may sometimes be seen scampering out of sight among higher peaks of the Alps, and highest of all on the edge of snow and ice live the shy herds of chamois, a sort of goat-like antelope that is the great prize of the Alpine sportsman. It is not easy to climb even within shot of the chamois ; and it is believed that when feeding they put out a sentinel to give the alarm at any approach of danger ; then in an instant they are off among the rocks where no human foot can follow them, unless that of daring hunters, who are said sometimes to let their bare toes be cut on sharp stones that the blood may help to glue them upon the slippery path. At the worst places climbers often have to put on a sort of spiked shoe, with which they dig out a hold for their steps.

On lofty points and edges of the Alps are the nests of eagles and vultures, that come swooping into the valleys to carry off kids or lambs, sometimes even babies, to feed their hungry young ones. There are many tales

of bold adventures with these fierce birds; boys who go on such big birds'-nesting must take the risk of having their eyes pecked out, when beaten down by wings that spread to a tall man's height. In some caves of the Alps bears still sleep away the hard winter; but roads and railways seem to have scared them out of Switzerland, though a pit or bears is kept at Berne as a sort of living crest for this city. Chamois and eagles, too, have been dying out in Switzerland itself; but they are still found among neighbouring Alpine mountains not so much disturbed by travellers.

What Switzerland is worst off for is fish, this being the one European country that does not touch the sea; and its only fleet is the steamboats that every summer carry tens of thousands of tourists among the lovely prospects of its blue lakes. But while strangers come in crowds to this country, its own people are much in the way of leaving it to seek their fortune abroad, at least for a time. In former days, the brave Swiss used to hire themselves out as soldiers to the princes of Europe, who trusted them for bodyguards better than their own subjects. Nowadays they are often found serving as hotel-waiters in England and other countries, where they show themselves quick at picking up the languages of the foreigners that fill so many hotels in Switzerland.

X

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

THE Alps of Switzerland pass into those of Austria, commonly spoken of as the Austrian Empire, because its ruler long claimed to represent the old Roman Emperors of Europe. But his dominion consists of two divisions—a western one, where he is styled an Emperor, and the eastern kingdom of Hungary, whose people jealously stand out for being a separate nation. Under him, indeed, are united several peoples speaking more than a dozen different languages, and often looking on their fellow-subjects as foreigners; so it is feared this big empire may some day fall in pieces, weakened as it has been by the attacks of Napoleon, then, in our own time, of the new German Empire headed by Prussia.

The part of it best known to us is Tirol, the Alpine region beside Switzerland, which also makes a favourite playground for tourists from all Europe. Like Switzerland, this is a beautiful land of snowy mountain-tops and wooded valleys, thinly peopled by sturdy highlanders, who, like the Swiss, are often driven to seek fortune in other countries, always hoping to come back to die in their own beloved land. Even the children go abroad to look for work. It was an old custom in the Northern Tirol to gather great troops of hardy boys and girls, who, in spring, were driven like a flock of sheep across the mountains into the richer Suabia, a

name for the south edge of Germany. In one of the towns here was held a regular fair for hiring out these youngsters as herds, little nursemaids, and servants-of-all-work on German farms ; then in the autumn they assembled at the same town to march back, with the few shillings they had been able to earn, that would help to keep the pot boiling in their own poor homes through the hard winter. The pilgrimage of the little emigrants, many of them not yet in their teens, used to be full of hardships and even dangers; but now they are better looked after by kind folk, and can be carried on their journey by train in as many hours as it once took days to pass the snowy Alps.

In the Tirol winter nights, or all the year round, young and old folk often find work in making toys for idler children. There is plenty of wood in the Tirol, where the people learn to be clever at carving. Nearly all the inhabitants of one town are employed in cutting and painting dolls, rocking-horses, dogs, sheep, and other animals. For live cattle the Tirolers have sheep and goats, which through the summer are fed upon Alpine pastures, as in Switzerland. In the high mountain wilds are deer, chamois, and other game, not so easy to shoot, or even to get in sight of, as are rabbits and pheasants in our country.

Tirol is dotted by hundreds of ruined castles that make monuments of its warlike history, and it has several fine towns much visited by strangers. The chief city is Innspruck, a name meaning the bridge on the

river Inn. Its great sight is the old church containing statues of many famous kings and princes, among them our own legendary King Arthur, memorials of whom are found even farther from Britain. Another monument here is that of Hofer, the Tirolese hero. Most national heroes are rather doubtful personages. We know not for certain when and where Arthur lived, and cannot be sure if there ever was such a man as William Tell, or if all the stories be true told of the English Alfred and the Scottish Wallace; but Hofer died only a hundred years ago, and his exploits are matter of history. When Napoleon tried to conquer all Europe, this simple innkeeper, as he was, headed his countrymen in such brave resistance that the French soldiers were more than once defeated by his little army of peasants; and when the rest of Austria had been overcome, Tirol kept itself independent. But Hofer was betrayed to the French and shot by order of Napoleon, whose ungenerous spite against such a hero is a blot upon his fame.

The whole of Tirol does not belong to Austria. The northern edge, with its famous lakes, is in Bavaria, which makes part of the German Empire. Most of the Tirolers speak German, but in the south of the Austrian province the language changes to Italian. Through the famous Brenner Pass of the Alps runs a railway, beside what used to be the main road from Germany into Italy. The rich northern plain of Italy called Lombardy belonged to Austria till our own time,

when it was able to shake off the yoke of that foreign Power; but still a good many Italians live under the Austrian Government.

Beyond Tirol come other grand mountain-lands. Across the River Inn is a province known as the Salt Country, because in its hills are mines of salt, through which visitors pass by long tunnels opening into gloomy halls and ponds, lit up to show the sparkling crystals and masses of rock-salt. A salt-mine is a cleaner place to visit than a coal-mine, so some of these excavations make favourite sights. Salt-baths are much used by people in the middle of Europe, who have a long way to go to the sea. There are many mineral springs in Austria, the most famous spas, such as Carlsbad and Marienbad, being in Bohemia to the north, a province celebrated also for its picturesque capital, Prague, and for the beauties of its mountain-edge, from which the Elbe flows on into Germany. But the Bohemians are not so friendly to strangers as the Tirolers, and their language is a very difficult one, hardly spoken outside their own country.

To the east of Bohemia lies the province of Moravia, with a small strip of Silesia, the rest of which was taken away from Austria by Prussia. All this, like Bohemia, is a mountainous country, with mines and manufactures as its chief riches. The most famous places in this corner of Austria are battle-fields, such as Austerlitz, where Napoleon won the greatest of his victories. Another celebrated name is that of the Moravian

Brethren, as they are called, though they properly came from Bohemia, a body of Christians persecuted out of the Austrian dominions, who have gone as missionaries into several parts of the world, and set up schools in England and Germany.

To the south rise the rough mountains of Styria and Carinthia, below which there is a curious limestone country, showing on a large scale the same freaks of Nature as we see in the Peak of Derbyshire. Here streams and lakes will often be swallowed up in subterranean fissures of the limestone, and hill-sides are hollowed out into caves, where a constant dropping of lime-water forms the stone icicles, as it were, called stalactites and stalagmites. The most wonderful exhibition of this kind in Europe is the vast cave of Adelsberg, behind the head of the Adriatic Sea, where one can walk a couple of miles underground through galleries of marvellous sights, lit up to shine like the jewels of Aladdin's palace. Still further south, the Croatian and Dalmatian edges of the Adriatic Sea belong to the Austrian Empire, which on this Mediterranean gulf has its only bit of sea-coast, with Trieste for its chief port.

Austria's want of sea-coast is partly made up for by the great River Danube running almost right across it, and navigable by steamers all the way. Rising in the Black Forest and flowing through Bavaria, the Danube enters the Archduchy of Austria, a small but fertile and pleasant country that makes the heart of the empire. Its inhabitants are mostly Germans, cut off from the

rest of Germany by the Bohemian and Moravian mountains. But people from all the provinces, with Jews, Turks, Greeks, Italians, and other strangers, are to be seen at Vienna, the capital, one of the finest cities in Europe, where the Austrian Emperor usually lives. Beside Vienna, the Danube is a broad river branching out round wooded islands, its stream too strong to swim against. Here it still flows in sight of green hills; then, a good way below Vienna, it pours through a mountain-pass and by a maze of islands, to make crooked windings over the flats of Hungary.

Hungary has a double capital, the picturesque cities of Buda and Pesth, separated by the Danube. This is quite a different country, inhabited mainly by a people originally from Asia, who speak a language of their own and are very proud of their independence; though, to tell the truth, they seem not so well off as the German towns and settlements that have sprung up among them. Several sorts of people are packed together in this country, where Jews and gipsies will often be met with, and the country-folk still wear the curious old-fashioned costumes which some of us may have seen at the Hungarian Exhibition held lately in London.

Hungary differs also in appearance from Austria. Most of it is a great open plain, watered by the Danube and its tributaries. One can sail down the broad river for a hundred miles without seeing a town or hardly a real village upon the marshy, grassy, or scrubby flats stretching as far as the eye can reach over a plain

often dotted by islands of wood, cornfields, and pools, with herds of cattle and pigs feeding or sleeping here and there, near some group of mud-huts that make an untidy hamlet. Lower down the valley of the Danube again becomes more rugged, and it leaves Hungary through a grand gorge or crags known as the Iron Gates, where its rocky bed has of late years been blown up to clear a passage for large craft down to the Black Sea.

The Hungarian plains are ringed round by a fine mountain-range called the Carpathians, not so high as the Alps, but twice as high as our British mountains. Beyond this range the Austrian Empire takes in the highland province of Transylvania, and at the north-east corner a large part of what once was Poland. The fate of Poland makes a sad tale. This was long a proud and free kingdom that played its part in the history of Europe, till, falling into troubles, it came to be conquered and divided between its three neighbours—Russia, Prussia, and Austria. But still the Poles, though subject to foreign masters, cling to their own name and language, and are slow to give up hope that some day their country may win back its fame and its freedom. Lemberg is the largest town of Austrian Poland, the province called Galicia ; but its old capital is Cracow on the long River Vistula, that flows on through Prussia and Russia into the Baltic.

XI

ITALY

On the south side of the Alps we come down into Italy, a land famous for its loveliness and for its proud history. In the days of the old Romans it was the mistress of the world; then it fell from its high place to be torn in pieces under foreign conquerors, and only in recent times was it again united as a nation. But in all their troubles the Italians never forget how they had been the teachers of Europe, when from their ancient cities, religion, civilization, art, and learning spread slowly among the wilder peoples of the north.

Below the mountains, on this side, with their ends running into Switzerland, lie the Italian Lakes, celebrated among the beauty-spots of Europe. The streams from them flow down to water the lowlands of Lombardy, where, out of the sweepings of the Alpine rocks, the chief river, Po, has built itself an embankment to run above the lower fields of wheat, maize, and rice that are kept moist by canals and ditches; then, at its mouth, this river goes on piling up new land, so that the old port of Adria, which gave its name to the Adriatic Sea, is now miles behind the coast-line.

On the rich plain lying across the top of Italy many a battle has been fought for the mastery of this often-conquered land, and many a strong town rose here in old days, some of them still flourishing. One of the

most prosperous Italian cities is Milan, the capital of Lombardy, whose marble cathedral, with its white spires, seems to copy the snowy Alpine summits that stand in view through the sunny air. One of the most amous is Venice, built upon a hundred islands of the low, sandy coast, where the streets are waterways, and the place of carriages is taken by oddly-shaped black boats called gondolas, gliding silently between rows of marble palaces that, from a little distance, appear to rise out of the sea. Venice, at that time an independent State, was once a chief seaport of the world.

The chief Italian port now is Genoa, which stands below a chain of Alps rising along the sea-coast, in front of the mountainous Piedmont, with its capital, Turin. The Alps shelter this coast from cold winds and clouds, so that it is celebrated for its bright winter climate, as well as for its beauty; and, under the name of the Riviera, the Italian for *shore*, it is well known to British and other Northern visitors, who here seek refuge from their native frosts and fogs. But the western part of the Riviera belongs to France; and such favourite resorts as Nice and Mentone, once Italian, have now become French towns.

The main part of Italy is a long promontory, the shape of which has often been compared to a boot. All down the leg of it runs another ridge of mountains named the Apennines, falling to the sea on each side in plains that have often become unwholesome marshes, where men can hardly live. But the hill-sides and

valleys show picturesque towns and high-perched villages, looking over woods and fields, where vineyards, olive-groves, orange-gardens, and beds of melons and tomatoes growing in the open air tell how this is a sunnier land than ours. Below the Apennines lie ancient cities like Florence and Pisa, rich in treasures of art; and many a noble palace, and many a broken ruin, stand as monuments of Italy's past greatness. The people themselves are notable for their handsome looks and pleasing manners, as for their picturesque costumes. They seem to have a natural taste for beauty, so that a beggar in rags, or a half-naked fisher-boy, could go straight into a picture. But centuries of poverty and ignorance have bred too many robbers, beggars, and idlers in this lovely land.

The capital of Italy is Rome, which once could boast itself the capital of the world. When we Britons were still half-naked barbarians in our thick forests, this town on the Tiber began to rise to greatness. Its inhabitants, at first a mere robber band, conquered their neighbours one by one, then went on to conquer Italy, and spread the power of their republic round the Mediterranean, till they ended by being masters of almost every country then known. At one time Rome is believed to have held several millions of inhabitants, gathered from all quarters. But before the city grew so large, its true greatness had begun to decay. Wealth and pride corrupted the Romans' manliness. By ruinous civil wars they let themselves fall under tyrants and,

lost their old spirit, till they could no longer stand against the fierce barbarians of the North when those former vassals turned against their masters.

Yet, after losing its rank as seat of the Emperors, Rome rose to fresh renown through its Popes, long looked on as the heads of Christendom. Again and again the city has been taken and plundered; but its many foes were never able to destroy it utterly; and still, as signs of its old state, it has ruins like the Forum, the central place of ancient Rome, and the Colosseum, an open-air theatre, in which the early Christians were exposed to wild beasts for the amusement of a bloodthirsty populace. But the courage and sufferings of those martyrs did not go in vain, for by-and-by the new faith won over all Europe; and the great city, where it had been so cruelly persecuted, came to be filled with Christian churches, one of them St. Peter's, the largest and most celebrated in the world.

Rome is not now the largest city of Italy. Larger, and almost as famous, is Naples, lying further south, beautifully situated on a bay of the Mediterranean. In the centre of this bay rises the smoky top of Vesuvius, fearsomely renowned as one of the few volcanoes still active in Europe, while many others, much larger and more destructive, are still at work in distant regions. Even in our own island, as elsewhere, there are green hills that were once burning volcanoes, pouring out clouds of hot ashes and torrents of melted

rock called lava, to ruin the country around far and wide. But, unlike those extinct volcanoes, burnt out long ago, Vesuvius is still so full of hidden fire that on some parts of it a stick thrust into a hole will burst into a blaze. Only the other day it broke out in a fierce eruption, which blew away the rim of its crater—the funnel-shaped vent at the top—and set the poor people round its foot flying from the streams of scorching lava that threatened to overwhelm their homes. Luckily, the lava flows slowly, like treacle, so that people can get out of its way; and as it cools down it hardens into rock, which by-and-by comes to be overgrown with fresh green springing up on the crumbled surface. Far more dangerous are the floods of mud and the clouds of ashes volcanoes sometimes throw out to a great distance, burying the green earth below and darkening the sky like night.

The most famous eruption of Vesuvius was in the first century of our era, when it poured out such a mass of red-hot cinders as to overwhelm the Roman city of Pompeii at its feet. The inhabitants had to run for their lives; but some, who could not escape in time, were stifled or scorched by the burning hail that buried their houses several yards deep. Among other skeletons was found that of a soldier, who seems to have died rather than leave his post. For many centuries the city lay hid, till its fate was almost forgotten; but in modern times, after some of the remains had accidentally been turned up, the rubbish was gradually

cleared away, and its roofless walls have now been laid bare, showing what Roman homes were, and how the people lived. This is one of the great sights of Italy. Not far off, another ancient city, Herculaneum, was buried at the same time, but rather by a stream of lava, which is not so easy to dig away, and the ruins are now covered over by a seaside suburb of Naples, so that only part of them has been opened out.

All around Vesuvius are other signs of the same violence of Nature—a hill that was thrown up in a single night, patches of rotten ground sending out poisonous fumes and hot springs, and round hollows which once were the craters of volcanoes, but now, in several parts of Italy, are often found filled with calm blue lakes. Many parts, especially in the south, are still from time to time terrified by earthquakes, that here throw down whole towns and kill hundreds of people, who have no warning of their danger till, perhaps in the dead of night, they find their homes crashing about them upon the ground, heaved and shaken like a stormy sea. It is not known for certain what is the cause of earthquakes; but they usually go along with volcanic action, as if both came from some similar explosion underground. In Britain we sometimes feel a slight earthquake shock, such as happens pretty often in one part of Scotland, luckily without doing any great harm.

An Italian volcano much larger than Vesuvius is Etna, which rises so high that its fiery head will be covered with snow, even while it pours out the same

burning showers and streams that about it have sometimes killed thousands of people. This mountain stands on the three-cornered island of Sicily, one of whose chief productions is sulphur thrown out by former eruptions. The beautiful city of Palermo, on a bay of the north coast, is the chief place of Sicily, which has other old towns and fine monuments of the various nations who from time to time have held mastery in this rich island. Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Africans, and Normans, their descendants are now mixed up in a strange jumble of people, who speak a peculiar kind of Italian. These hot-blooded Sicilians are less civilized than their fellow-countrymen in the north, and the Government is not always able to keep them from robbing and murdering each other.

Italy has other islands, largest of them the wild and mountainous Sardinia, which lies far out in the Mediterranean, beside the French Corsica. The small island of Stromboli, near the south coast of the mainland, is notable as being an active volcano that burns itself away in the sea without doing much mischief. Malta, to the south of Sicily, is a name familiar to us, as this little Italian island belongs to Britain, held as a strongly fortified station for our fleet, so that red-coats and blue-jackets are common here among the showy costumes of the half-African natives.

XII

THE SPANISH PENINSULA

On the south side of Europe, three large promontories stand out into the Mediterranean. To the west of the central one, Italy, comes Spain, which is sometimes called *the* Peninsula, as largest of the three, peninsula, of course, meaning a stretch of land so nearly surrounded by the sea as to be almost an island. The west side of this peninsula holds, also, the smaller kingdom of Portugal, whose people are much the same as the Spaniards, but have come to live under a separate government and to speak a rather different language, as in the case of Norway and Sweden. Spain is the larger and more famous country, made up of several once independent states—Navarre, Castile, Catalonia, Andalusia, and others, that in the Middle Ages joined together to make up one kingdom.

In early days, after it had been conquered by the Romans, the Peninsula was overrun by barbarians from the north, then, again, by Moors from Africa, who for centuries held out against their Christian neighbours. The Moors were then a more civilized people than the Christians, as is shown by some of the fine buildings they left behind when they had at last been driven back to Africa. Some of the great Spanish churches were built for Mohammedan mosques; and the most famous old palace in Spain, the Alhambra,

belonged to the Moorish princes who once ruled over the southern kingdom of Grenada. In their long wars the Spaniards got mixed up with those dark-skinned Africans, so as to take on a good deal of their manners and looks, and thus become marked out among the peoples of Europe.

Once united as a Christian nation, Spain for a time rose to greatness. In those days the Spaniards and the Portuguese were the boldest mariners in the world, who took the lead in sailing to new regions, and especially in conquering America, after it had been discovered by the Italian Columbus, sailing in the service of Spain. But soon English sailors began to dispute Spain's power on the sea; and when its king, Philip II., sent out his great Armada to attack England, we know how it was scattered to the winds. At the same time the sturdy Dutchmen got rid of their Spanish masters; then, as the northern peoples grew in wealth and strength and knowledge, Spain fell to decay through bad government, through ignorance, and through foolish pride, that would not let this nation learn the best lesson of misfortunes, how to do better.

A century ago, when the Peninsula was almost conquered by Napoleon's forces, its people could not drive away these invaders without the help of an English army in the celebrated Peninsular War. Then one by one her colonies in America rose against Spain; and not long ago she lost the last of her great dominions across the sea in a disastrous war with America. The

country has also suffered much from civil wars and changes of government; but now, for the time, it seems settled down under a young King, whose wife is an English princess.

The Spaniards have some good points of their own. They are polite, brave, patient, and can live on very little, having learned to be temperate through poverty, that is partly their own fault, for they are backward in knowledge and enterprise, much too well pleased with themselves to take hints from more thriving peoples—their old enemies, the Moors, for instance, who appear to have cultivated the country better than its own people take pains to do. It may be their partly Moorish blood that is to blame for one of their worst qualities, a cruelty to animals, shown in the national sport of bull-fighting. Here, as in no other Christian land, savage bulls are tormented to death for the amusement of crowds, men, women, and children, all more excited by the spectacle of maddened bulls and gored horses than we are by a race or a football match.

The best of the Spanish people, the least ignorant and most stirring, seem to be the Basques of the north-west corner, a race that spreads over into France. On this side Spain is separated from France by the high wall of the Pyrenees; and in the centre and the south rise other lofty ranges, usually called *sierras*, an expressive word meaning the teeth of a saw. Between these sharp edges of rock and snow most of the country stands as high as any English mountain, which gives it a

very cold climate in winter, while in summer it is baked by a hot southern sun; and much of it has a brown, burned-up look, like the faces of the people, who have to bear great extremes of climate. The plains of the south, however, and strips of low land by the coast have a better climate; there, when the fields can be well watered, they grow not only grapes, olives, oranges, and forests of chestnuts, but sometimes dates, bananas, and sugar-canes, which are hardly found ripening elsewhere on the north side of the Mediterranean.

One of the best-known productions of Spain is its sherry wine. The corks of bottles come also from this peninsula, being cut out of the bark of a kind of oak. Spain is rich in mines of iron, copper, lead, and quicksilver, which are often worked by foreigners. The country people rear many sheep and cattle, not only for wool, milk, and meat; but here, as in other parts of Europe, oxen are harnessed in carts and ploughs. Mules and donkeys, as well as horses, are much used both for riding and driving on the bad roads of this land of dusty plains and rocky mountains. Some railways have been made, but not so many as in more industrious countries; and they seem not so much wanted by a people who do not care to put themselves in a hurry, "to-morrow" being their favourite time for doing anything that ought to be done at once.

In some parts of Spain little rain falls, and most of its rivers, dried up and flooded by turns, are not of much use for navigation, as are the steadily flowing

streams of our more temperate land. The chief river is the Tagus, which flows almost right across Spain and Portugal, to fall into the Atlantic by the harbour of Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, celebrated for the earthquake that destroyed it in 1755, when many thousands of people were killed.

The chief port of Portugal is Oporto, which gives its name to port wine. Portugal is a fine country for fruit, but on the whole it has become even more poor and dried up than Spain, though it still keeps its large but ill-managed colonies in Africa. At home, its ignorant people seem discontented and rebellious, without being able to help themselves to a better government. Not long ago the King and his eldest son were murdered while driving through the streets of Lisbon ; and the second son, who was wounded at the same time, came as a lad to the crown that is no enviable inheritance.

The capital of Spain is Madrid, almost in the centre of the peninsula, a fine city standing high on a bare, dismal tableland, exposed to freezing winds in winter and to stifling heat in summer. About as large, and more flourishing through its manufactures and commerce, is Barcelona on the east coast, the most go-ahead place in the country. Other great seaports are Valencia and Malaga, on the Mediterranean; Cadiz in the south, on the Atlantic; and Bilboa in the north, on a river opening into the Bay of Biscay. Inland stand many famous cities, such as Seville, Cordova, Grenada, and

Mercia in the south; Toledo and Segovia in the centre; Valladolid and Saragossa in the north; but too often Spanish towns show the decay and poverty that have fallen upon the whole land. The names of several of them, Talavera, Salamanca, Burgoz, and San Sebastian, for instance, have become familiar to us through Wellington's victories in the Peninsular War; and the Spanish islands of Majorca and Minorca are also known in the history of our navy.

The Spanish name best known to us is Gibraltar, that huge rock that rises above the strait separating Spain from Africa, not far from Cape Trafalgar, where Nelson fell in his greatest sea-fight. Two centuries ago Gibraltar was taken by our fleet, and has ever since been held as a British fortress, guarding for our fleet the entrance to the Mediterranean. It is almost an island, joined to the mainland by a sandy neck on which English and Spanish sentries stand facing one another, the Spaniards not too well pleased to see the Union Jack flying over this bit of their native land. The hill of bare rock makes a natural castle, from whose batteries and galleries the African coast can be seen not a dozen miles off across the sea. On the rock live a band of apes that have made their way over from Africa; and in a marshy district of Southern Spain may still be found a few camels running wild, as another sign how much this corner of Europe has had to do with Africa.

XIII

GREECE

To the east of Italy, across the Adriatic Sea, comes the Balkan Peninsula, so named from the Balkan Mountains running through it. This is now split up into separate countries, only its southern end keeping the name of Greece, a name once far greater and more widely spread. The Greeks, or Hellenes, as they called themselves, were the first famous nation of Europe, among whom arts and learning sprung up while the Romans were still barbarians, long before Britons, Saxons, or Northmen were heard of in history. The civilization of this people apparently came out of Asia or Egypt, from which the many islands at the east end of the Mediterranean reached over like stepping-stones to Greece. Their island homes and the harbours of the jagged mainland helped to make the Greeks bold sailors. Then, very early, they began to send out colonies into Asia Minor, into the south of Italy, and to other parts of the Mediterranean, where people of Greek descent may still be found living, but no longer as masters, now that their own country has fallen from its old greatness.

The weak point of Greece all along was its being no united nation, but broken up into small States jealous of each other, and often at war. For a time they might stand together, as when they beat back the Persian Kings seeking to enslave the whole country; but even

then the Greeks of different cities were apt to fall out, or to turn against their own leaders. By those quarrels the separate States grew so weak as at last to be overcome by Philip, King of Macedon, whose son, Alexander the Great, led the Greeks to the conquest of Persia, till then the mightiest power in the known world. But the empire founded by Alexander soon went to pieces, leaving the Greeks exposed to fresh conquerors.

Meanwhile the power of the Romans had been growing up in Italy, and when they had mastered all the peoples about them they easily made Greece into a province of Rome. Later on, the Roman republic having become a huge empire that claimed to rule the world, it split into two parts, one called the Latin Empire, with its seat at Rome, while the other came to be known as the Greek Empire, and had its capital at the city named Constantinople, after the Emperor Constantine, who built it on the Bosphorus. The so-called Greek or Eastern Empire lasted for a thousand years, but there was little to be proud of in its long history. At last, about the time of our Wars of the Roses, the fierce Turks from Asia captured Constantinople, and settled themselves as masters in this corner of Europe.

Thus the unfortunate Greeks, once the noblest people in the world, became slaves of the Turks, who treated them so badly that not quite a century ago part of them rose in rebellion. After some years of fighting,

the chief Christian nations interfered, forcing the Turks to let Greece become an independent nation under a foreign king. This, indeed, is only part of the ancient Greece, whose old glory has not been inherited by the poor and ill-taught people that boast such a proud name.

The capital of the Greek kingdom is Athens, where still may be seen ruins of the temples and other stately buildings and works of art that made it famous of old. But no more than the name is left of Sparta, the great rival of Athens among the Greek cities. While the Athenians distinguished themselves in arts and literature as well as in war, and thought of beauty as the thing best worth living for, the Spartans held fighting to be the chief end of man. Their boys were trained, above all, to be brave, hardy, and obedient to those set over them; as part of their education they had to bear without a murmur such severe scourgings that sometimes they died under the lash. They grew up to despise riches and luxury, to be content with the plainest food, and to be always ready to face death and danger. So it was in the good old days; and though in time this race seems to have lost its virtue, the name "Spartan" has remained a proverb for the scorn of ease and pain and danger that once made their little city the greatest in Greece.

Sparta lay in the southern half of Greece, called the Peloponnesus, now the Morea, joined by a narrow neck of land to the northern part, in which stands

Athens. The Morea is almost an island, altogether so since a canal has been cut through the neck, known as the Isthmus of Corinth, from another city built here. Corinth is now little more than a village, whose name has become familiar to us in the small dried grapes called *corinths*, or currants, that are among the chief productions of modern Greece. Another thing sent us from the islands of Greece is sponges, which are really a kind of animal pulled up by divers from the bottom of the sea.

One of the most famous spots in old Greece was the plain of Olympia, where every four years were held the great Olympic games. Here, their feuds for the moment laid aside, champions from all the Greek States came together for contests in racing, running, wrestling, boxing, and other sports, the prize being a simple garland of leaves; but the honour of winning seemed greater than the richest trophy. Of late the Olympic games have been started afresh, no longer at Olympia, but at different places, and not always in Greece. This year they came to be held in London, a place never heard of till centuries after those old Greek cities were renowned for buildings like the temples that still raise their ruined columns above Athens.

XIV

TURKEY

THE north part of what used to be Greece is now Turkey in Europe, held by a people who have no business here. The fierce Turks came from the centre of Asia, conquering far and wide in their own country, and pressing into this corner of Europe when the degenerate Greeks could no longer defend it. Here they settled, as did their fellow-believers, the Moors, in Spain, and for a time they were a dread to the Christian countries beside them. Often they ravaged Hungary, and once got as far as Vienna, to be defeated in a great battle by John Sobieski, King of Poland. By sea, too, the Turks were long formidable. But by-and-by these terrible fighters, in turn, grew fat and fond of ease, till Europe no longer need be afraid of the Turk, once looked on as a bogey, but now rather as a nuisance.

On the narrow strait of the Bosphorus, joining the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, stands Constantinople, that famous capital which, from the sea, seems one of the most beautiful cities in the world. But a peep into its narrow crooked streets shows them decayed and dirty, many of its noble old buildings in ruin, and everywhere signs of being behind the times, though now railways and tramways make their appearance even here. The filthy streets are left to be

cleaned by hordes of scavenger dogs that run almost wild through the city, to the alarm of strangers. Another sight often seen in Constantinople is great flocks of pigeons, for the Turks, not over-kind to some animals, have a tenderness for birds, and take feeding them to be a religious duty. The pigeons nest by hundreds in the round cupolas and tall, slender minarets of the mosques, which are the churches of a Mohammedan country. The chief mosque here, St. Sophia, was once one of the grandest of Christian cathedrals, which the Turks turned to the use of their own religion, as the Spaniards did with the Moorish mosques captured by them.

On going into a mosque, people take off their shoes in sign of respect, but not the turbans or red fez caps they wear. Women, when they stir out of doors, are expected to keep their faces always covered with a veil, a custom usual in Mohammedan countries, where women commonly have a hard life of it, being sometimes, indeed, shut up almost as prisoners in their homes. Every Turkish house should be divided into two parts, one called the *harem*, for the women, into which no man must enter except their husbands or family. A rich Turk can have three or four wives, who are often little better than his servants. Such customs of treating women as inferiors are common in the East, as among most backward peoples. One good custom of the Turks is that their religion forbids them to drink intoxicating liquors; but they

are very fond of smoking, which helps to make them lazy.

At Constantinople, to be sure, the old customs have been a good deal broken down by intercourse with foreigners. Most of the business is carried on by Christian merchants living in a separate quarter of the city, which looks the most thriving part of it. In the whole country less than half the people are Turks, who yet can behave as masters over the rest, and bad masters they make. The real Turks have some good qualities—as what race has not?—but they have come down to be stupid, sleepy, and careless. In a Turkish village one will see everything much as it was in old times, the dirty street, the bad road, the public well, the clumsy cart or wooden plough, in which are yoked slow oxen, that go quick enough for their drivers. Even in Constantinople it was only in recent times that the Turks would allow fire-engines to be used. When their rotten old wooden houses went ablaze, as was always happening through heedlessness, they would not take the trouble to put out the fire, but left that business to Providence, as if any power would help those who did not try to help themselves.

The Sultan, as the ruler of Turkey is styled, lives at Constantinople; but the larger part of his dominions lies in Asia, the shores of which can be plainly seen across the Bosphorus, where, indeed, stands a suburb of the city called Scutari. Turkey in Asia is made up of what have once been rich countries and provinces,

inhabited by Greeks, Armenians, and other Christians, as well as by Turks, most of them become ill-off through bad government. This region, the western-most corner of Asia, is sometimes still known by its ancient name, Asia Minor. Many of its once-famous cities and ports have fallen into decay, the most flourishing of them, through its trade in figs, silk, etc., being Smyrna, on the eastern end of the Mediterranean, known as the Levant. The largest island in this sea is Cyprus, that has some chance of growing more prosperous now that it has been taken under the management of Britain.

The northern part of the Balkan Peninsula, where the Danube creeps to the sea through several mouths, used also to belong to Turkey; but, seeing how its Christian people were ill-treated, other nations interfered to rescue them from their Turkish tyrants, and to set them up in new states like Greece, under such names as Bulgaria, Roumania, and Servia. It may be a long time before these countries get over the mischief done by Turkish misgovernment; but perhaps some of us will see the Sultan turned out of Europe, as might have happened long ago had his neighbours been able to agree which of them should be heir to so important a city as Constantinople, at one time the capital of Christendom.

XV

RUSSIA

TURKEY'S chief enemy has long been Russia, that from the Black Sea stretches right up to the Arctic Ocean in the far North. This, making more than half of all Europe, is by far the largest Christian country, but by no means the greatest, for all its size. Its people are partly Asiatic, and not thoroughly civilized; nor has their Government helped them to much improvement. Their Emperor, or Czar, ruled over them like an Eastern despot—that is, with no law but his own will and the fear of being murdered, as has been often his fate. Lately, becoming discontented with this kind of government, the Russians have been trying to win more liberty; but the mass of them are so ignorant, ill-off, and given to drunkenness, that they seem very little fit to be free citizens. They have many nobles, very proud and sometimes very poor, who think it beneath them to do anything useful unless serving as officers in the army. Trade and business is much in the hands of foreigners and of Jews, who on this side of Europe are despised, hated, and sometimes cruelly ill-used. The Russians call themselves the only true Christians; but the Greek Church, to which most of them belong, is a corrupt and superstitious form of religion, more concerned with gabbling prayers before the images of saints than with teaching people their duty to one

another. Another matter in which Russia differs from all Europe is its language, a difficult one to learn, its very alphabet being not the same as that now used in most civilized countries.

The look of Russia is unlike the other lands of Europe. Unless at the edges, there are hardly any mountains in this huge country, most of it made up of flat plains, over which the rivers run slowly and crookedly. The chief river, the longest in all Europe, is the Volga, ten times as long as our Thames, which flows into the Caspian Sea, an enormous salt lake opening between Russia and Central Asia. The highest mountains are the Caucasus range on another edge of Asia, to the south, where some snowy peaks stand as high as the Alps. A lower line of mountains, called the Urals, separates Russia from the north of Asia.

There being no heights to break the freezing winds from the north, Russia is a very cold country in winter; but in summer a want of rain makes it hot and dusty. For months together its plains lie covered with snow; and the mouths of its rivers are choked up with ice, those in the north for nearly half the year. The warmest part seems to be in the southern peninsula called the Crimea, that is a good deal further south than England; yet when our soldiers had to besiege Sebastopol here in the Crimean War, they suffered terribly from the winter cold.

The Russians themselves are hardened to great heat and cold. In the severe winter children may be seen

running out of doors with less clothes on than our youngsters wear in summer, the result of which is that the weakly ones die off early, and the rest grow up strong and hardy. At all seasons the people are fond of what have come to be called Russian baths, where they sit stewing themselves in a room full of hot steam, then, after being beaten with birch twigs to make their blood tingle, they will jump into cold water, or run out to roll naked in the snow. They have much need of some such thorough cleaning, for their houses and their habits are apt to be dirty. In the cities, indeed, there are magnificent palaces, kept warm by stoves and hot pipes in winter, when rich people hardly go out unless wrapped up in thick furs.

An Empress of Russia had once the whim of building herself a palace of ice blocks dug out from the river on which her capital stands. Walls, roof, windows, and all were made of ice, which was carved into pillars, statues, and other ornaments; the chairs, tables, and so forth were also shaped out of ice, and before the palace stood a battery of ice cannon, so strong that they could be fired without bursting; but, of course, when the warm weather came on, all this glittering show had soon melted away. The Russian summer is so hot that people are glad of the ice cut out from their frozen lakes and rivers, to be stored away in cool cellars till it comes into use as a luxury. But in winter there is no need of taking trouble to preserve it, for then everything may be seen frozen stiff in a market-

place, butter like wax, fish hard as a stone, and the carcasses of beasts piled up like toy figures, from which the butcher hacks off a leg of beef or mutton as if it were a log of wood.

There are about three times as many people in Russia as in Britain ; but, since their country is ever so many times larger than ours, it is far less well populated. Some parts of it are still half wild ; and in the north the ground will be frozen most of the year, growing nothing but bushes and moss. Other parts are covered by great forests, that shelter bears and wolves. The bear, which has died out over most parts of Europe, is taken for the badge of Russia, so that we speak jocularly of the Russian Bear, as of the British Lion or the American Eagle. Bears are apt to sleep away the winter in a hollow tree, and at any time will seldom be dangerous to men unless when attacked ; but it is not so with the wolves. As a rule these cruel and cowardly beasts keep themselves out of sight ; yet hard weather drives them sallying from the woods in search of food, hunting in packs that often attack people as well as cattle. The Russians have many exciting tales to tell of travellers sledging across the snowy plains, who must race for their lives with a pack of hungry wolves behind them.

The capital of Russia is St. Petersburg, on the Neva, a river flowing into the Baltic Sea. This fine city was built and called after Peter the Great, the famous Czar who did so much to make his half-barbarous people a European nation. It is a well-known story how this

Emperor travelled into more advanced countries, working as a shipwright in Holland and England that he might learn how to build a fleet, and bringing back foreign craftsmen to teach his rude Russians the arts of civilization.

The older capital was Moscow, in the centre of the country, where the Czars are still crowned in a vast fortress called the Kremlin, a mass of palaces, churches and convents that makes a city in itself, its walls a mile round. The great event in the history of Moscow was its being taken by Napoleon when he invaded Russia in 1812; then the inhabitants set fire to their own city rather than let it shelter the enemy, who had to retreat in wintry weather with such terrible sufferings from cold and hunger that, of half a million of men, only some twentieth part came back.

Moscow, from which the Russians are sometimes called Moscovites, is not only their holy city, but their chief seat of manufactures. Their chief ports are Odessa, on the Black Sea, and Riga, on the Baltic. Warsaw is a great city, the capital of Russian Poland, whose people have never forgotten how they fought in vain for their freedom. Another conquest of Russia is Finland, with Helsingfors for its capital, a country which at one time belonged to Sweden, and its people are in some ways better than their Russian masters. Then other provinces of Russia about the Baltic Sea are largely inhabited by Germans, and by a people once called Lithuanians, the name of whose country is almost forgotten. On the

southern plains live the Cossacks, who originally came from Tartary, in Asia. So many races are thus mixed up in Russia, not all of them loving each other as fellow-countrymen ought to do.

This largest empire in Europe, that can raise an army millions strong, would have conquered Turkey by now had the other European nations been willing. On the eastern side, where for long no great Power interfered with its doings, it went on to conquer nearly half of Asia, making the Russian territory the largest in the world. Asian Russia includes a great central stretch of deserts and grassy plains called steppes, inhabited hitherto by wandering bands of Tartars, and also the vast lands of Siberia extending over the whole north side of Asia. At one time this region was used chiefly as a place of exile for convicts, often some of the best men in Russia, whose only crime was trying to improve their country. Now Siberia is known to be rich not only in mines, but in fertile land for growing wheat and other crops through the short hot summer. The northern part, indeed, is dark with wild forests that die off on the frozen shores of the Arctic Ocean, where nothing useful will grow. But in the southern fertile belt are being settled hardy Russian farmers, who as yet make a population less than that of some small European countries, but go on increasing now that a railway runs all through Siberia to bring their crops to market.

This railway, more than 5,000 miles long, bridging the great rivers of Siberia, joins the cities of Russia to her

ports on the Pacific Ocean. Here, of late years, the Russians got into trouble. They had been so used to dealing masterfully with Asiatic peoples that they made no scruple of seizing a Chinese province, in which the harbour of Port Arthur had the advantage of being free from ice all the winter. China was too feeble to object; but against that conquering empire stood up Japan, like a small boy to a big bully, and would not let Russia lay hands on what did not belong to her. A war began, in which the Russians fully expected to have the best of it; but to their dismay, they were beaten both by land and sea, and had to give up Port Arthur to the Japanese, who for the first time in modern history have shown an Asiatic people able to be a match for European soldiers.

XVI

JAPAN

THERE was a time when parts of Asia were the most flourishing lands of the world. History tells of famous and powerful states in the East while the kingdoms of Europe were still covered by forests and inhabited by tribes of skin-clad barbarians. But these rude peoples went on improving, learning, coming to be better off, growing into Christian and civilized nations, while the Oriental races fell into a state of stagnation for which a hot, sleepy climate seems often to blame. Change is the law of life, and where men will not trouble themselves

to change for the better, they are apt to change for the worse. In the East the life of most countries came to a stand-still, so that government, religion, customs, remain hardly more advanced than they were a thousand years ago; and when vigorous Europeans began to sail so far as to the Eastern seas, they were able to force themselves upon peoples that would rather have been left alone. Not content with trading, the Western adventurers took to conquering, an easy task where ten well-armed white men were a match for a hundred or a thousand Asiatics equipped only with such spears, knives, or clumsy guns as had been good enough for their forefathers. Thus in our day it had come about that most of Asia was more or less brought under the power of European governments, chiefly those of Britain and Russia.

Then one Asiatic nation surprised the world by showing itself by no means so helpless as its neighbours. This is Japan, as we call a country whose proper name is Niphon ("Land of the Rising Sun"). Japan has a certain resemblance to Britain. It also is a group of islands, lying in a temperate climate off the Asian mainland, much in the same way as Britain stands apart from the continent of Europe. In size and population Japan is only a little bigger than Britain. Its men take kindly to the sea and to settling in distant countries, as ours do. In looks, to be sure, they are very different, being much shorter, with dusky or yellowish skins, flat, smooth faces and straight black hair, like the other Mongol peoples

who are at home on this side of Asia, whereas we belong to the taller white race called Caucasian. But the "Japs," as we jokingly nickname them, have shown that a people may be little and good, and that stout hearts and wise heads may go with a sun-tanned skin.

When we got to know those stunted islanders, we were rather inclined to laugh at them, or even to bully them, while the Japanese at first wanted to have little to do with us. But when, in the middle of last century, American and European ships of war forced them to open their ports to trade, they behaved more sensibly about it than did other Eastern nations. Instead of fighting obstinately against superior forces, or submitting stupidly and sulkily, they soon saw how such meddling foreigners had certain advantages over them, then quickly set about improving their own condition after our example.

Japan went to school, as it were, with Europe. European teachers were invited to the country to give the people lessons in all that was better understood in the West than in the East. Japanese students travelled to Europe and America to learn the same lessons. This people proved so good at learning, and so willing to learn, that by-and-by they could do without foreign teachers, and in some matters, indeed, have even been able to give lessons to us. In the lifetime of one generation, they changed the system of their government; they brought into the country machinery, manufactures, railways, telegraphs, and other modern inventions; they set on foot a strong army and navy, at first buying, soon

learning to make for themselves, the most improved war-ships and weapons. Thanks to this preparation, Japan easily won in a war with China, a country very much bigger, but which had stuck to its slow, old-fashioned ways of fighting. And when, some years later, Russia, with its huge army, got beaten by the brave Japanese, it had to be owned that they were not only the most go-ahead nation in Asia, but one of the great powers of the world, which pays us the compliment of calling itself "the Britain of the East."

This remarkable people, who can fight so well for their country, have by no means a ferocious air. They seem friendly, good-natured, merry and gentle in their ways, which, with their short stature and beardless faces, make them in our eyes like grown-up children, though they can be serious enough when it comes to serious matters. Their children, on the other hand, appear to be more grave and better behaved than our youngsters. Children are very kindly treated here, and hardly need scolding or punishment, it comes so natural to them to be polite, obedient, and not to make a noise; then they seem as ready to go to school as to play. Among the great Japanese festivals are a general birthday of all the girls in March, and one for the boys in May, when the toy-shops will be crowded with people buying presents for each child of the family. Their toys are much like ours, tops, balls, shuttlecocks, and so forth, with dolls for the girls, and for the boys, swords, bows and arrows, and flags; the brothers' birthday, indeed, is called the Feast of

Flags, as the sisters' is the Feast of Dolls. Both big and little folk are fond of kites, made in various shapes and sizes ; and they have a curious game of setting kites to fight in the air, till one can be steered to cut the string of its adversary.

The Japanese have many customs that strike us as odd, being sometimes the exact opposite of ours. Where we would stand up they sit or, rather, squat down in sign of respect. They mount their horses on what we call the wrong side, drag their boats up by the stern, not by the bow, and their keys and screws are made to turn the opposite way to ours. A Japanese book begins at the end, the words running up from the bottom, not across the page ; then the letters are painted with a brush rather than written with a pen. A man carries a fan as well as an umbrella. A woman carries her baby, not in her arms, but on her back. Grown-up people travel about in a kind of big perambulators called rickshaws, drawn by men instead of horses. Both men and horses wear shoes made of straw, which soon wear out, so that on a journey a supply of shoes has to be taken along, costing, perhaps, a halfpenny a pair. The country-people sometimes thatch themselves in wet weather with a sort of straw cape ; but even when it is freezing they like to work almost naked.

Another material which has many uses here is paper. Of different kinds of tough paper are made shoes, hats, cloaks, umbrellas, handkerchiefs, lanterns, cups, string ; and walls for the houses are mostly built of thin laths

and paper, with sliding paper screens to divide them into rooms. Very little furniture is needed, as the Japanese are not used to sitting on chairs, and their beds will simply be quilts laid on the floor, with small wooden pillows. As for their food, they eat some things which seem queer to us ; not much meat, a thing, indeed, forbidden by their religion, but a good deal of fish and vegetables, especially rice, which they cleverly pick up with chopsticks, not much bigger than knitting-needles. Out of rice they brew a kind of beer ; and they drink a great deal of tea, without milk or sugar. They are very fond of hot baths, which the whole family take together every day. Their dress is loose and flowing, often of bright colours and fine materials, a boy being sometimes hard to tell from a girl, except by the way her hair is done up.

It seems a pity that, in the towns, the people's desire to be like Europeans makes them too often copy our ugly clothes, wearing coats, trousers, and tight frocks, in which they look not nearly so well as in their own easy and tasteful costumes. They have a fine sense of what is beautiful, as shown in their pottery, silks, enamelling, lacquer and other artistic work ; as also by their love for gardens, and for flowers and blossoms. One of the loveliest times of their year is the blossoming season, when the country seems all aglow with pink and white bloom. What they call the Feast of Cherry Blossom makes such a holiday for them as May Day used to be in Merry England. The national flower of Japan is the chrysanthemum, as the rose is of England ; and the crest

on the Japanese flag looks like a flower, but is intended to represent the rising sun.

Japan is a more mountainous land than Britain, the chief mountain being Fujiyama, which the people look on as sacred, and make pious pilgrimages to its snowy top. Many of the mountains are volcanoes, and the country is troubled with their eruptions; very often also with earthquakes, which may work terrible destruction, killing thousands of the inhabitants. It is for fear of the earthquakes that the houses are built of such light materials, which will not be dangerous to life when shaken down; but then the paper walls are very apt to catch fire by falling in a heap upon lamps and stoves, so that the flimsy Japanese buildings often get burned down, soon to be set up again after a great blaze that quickly spreads through many streets.

The capital is Tokio, in which the Emperor lives among nearly two millions of people. Not far off on the Gulf of Yedo is the seaport Yokohama, where most of the foreign merchants live. More to the west lies Kioto, the older capital, that is to Tokio what Moscow is to St. Petersburg, and has near it Osaka, the second city in size, which by its manufactures counts as the Glasgow or Birmingham of Japan. These and other great cities have railways, tramways, electric light, and so on, as in Europe; and, in Tokio especially, people begin to build houses more or less after the solid fashion of the West. At Tokio one may even see switchback railways set up close to the Buddhist temples that stand

here in thousands, some of them very nobly built and beautifully adorned.

Nearly all the chief towns are on the main island, answering to Great Britain. At each end of it lie smaller islands, the largest of them Yezo in the north, which has a colder climate and is less well populated and civilized. Southwards the long chain of Loo-Choo Islands lead like stepping-stones to the wild and grandly mountainous island of Formosa, which the Japanese some time ago took away from China to make it a colony of their own.

XVII

CHINA

In some ways China may boast itself the greatest country in the world. It is larger than all Europe; not quite so large as Russia together with its Asian dominions, yet better populated. Nobody knows for certain how many hundreds of millions of people live in China; but some accounts reckon them as nearly a quarter of the human race, which is believed to number about 1,700,000,000. The Chinese certainly make the most numerous nation on earth, even now that many of them have died off through famines, floods, and civil wars in the last century. Most of these people live in what they call the "Middle Kingdom," China proper, behind and round about which stretch

poorer and more thinly-peopled dependencies, Tibet, Turkestan, Tartary and Manchuria, besides the peninsula of Korea, that once was under the power of China, as it now is controlled by Japan.

China is also the oldest of the great nations. It has a history of thousands of years, the early part of which is, to be sure, rather dim, so as not to fix clearly where the Chinese came from; but their skin and features show that they mainly belong, like the Japanese, to the Mongolian race. They seem to have reached a certain degree of civilization long before the nations of Europe. Printing, paper, gunpowder, and the mariner's compass, which have made such a difference between our life and our ancestors', are all said to have been first invented in China. But the Chinese did not turn their discoveries to good use; and their civilization somehow stuck fast at a certain point, so that they hardly know more now than they did centuries ago. One weak point of this nation was its not being able to defend itself against bolder enemies. Once and again they let their country be overrun by warlike Tartars, whom in vain they tried to keep out by building round it the famous Great Wall of China, two thousand miles long. They have for many generations been ruled by a dynasty of Tartar emperors and soldiers, who are to China what the Norman conquerors were to England, with this difference, that the Normans soon became mixed up with the rest of the people, growing to have the same tastes, habits and interests.

Nor could the Tartar masters, in turn, defend themselves against Europeans who insisted on pushing themselves into China. The Chinese would have liked to keep out those strangers, whom they professed to despise as "foreign barbarians." But when it came to fighting, a few thousand of the foreigners proved a match for hosts of Chinese soldiers, clumsily armed and badly commanded. More than once a small European army has taken the capital of this huge country and forced its government to submission, while many of the people in out-of-the-way parts did not even know how it had been invaded.

Now, much against their will, the Chinese have had to give up certain ports in which white men carry on commerce with them; Britain, Germany and France, have seized bits of their coast; and all over the country thousands of Christian missionaries are at work trying to convert the people from their own ancient religions that teach them to talk fine rather than to do good. They are full of absurd superstitions that hinder improvements, such as the introduction of railways and machinery; indeed, everything new strikes them as objectionable, so great is their admiration for the wisdom of their forefathers. Instead of welcoming the lessons of Western civilization like Japan, they tried to shut their eyes to it, and to go on in their old sleepy ways. But of late the Japanese victories have made the Chinese wake up to a desire of imitating Japan's example. They have already got some railways

and some good guns, and if they could only get a good government, the European powers might find it not so easy to domineer over them.

The Chinese are by no means a barbarous people, but their civilization is a strange mixture of bad points and good ones. They are brought up to have an extraordinary respect for their fathers, for their governors, and for learned men. So far as big books go, this is one of the most learned nations in the world; but in their books a great many words make up very little meaning. Every Chinese word is a separate letter, so that it takes a long time to learn a language in which the alphabet should rather be called a dictionary. The girls are not much troubled with schooling, but boys often spend a great deal of time in learning what is mostly not worth learning. At the end of their education, those who pass the best examinations have a chance of being made mandarins, as the magistrates are called who rule the country. Its schools are now being improved, which is the first step towards improving the state of the nation.

Above all stands the Emperor, but he can hardly know what goes on over so vast a dominion; and many of his deputies do much as they please, so long as they are able to send him plenty of money, while a good share of the taxes finds its way into their own pockets. Bribery, cheating and lying seem sadly common among the mandarins, who yet are much looked up to, for a Chinaman thinks less of justice and

mercy than of authority and custom. Orientals, as a rule, are more in the way of putting up with oppression and unfairness, which we would not stand from our judges or princes. The punishments inflicted on prisoners in China are noted as very cruel, but some of the people seem to mind them so little that a man will often take money to let himself be beaten, tortured, or even put to death for another.

Books have a great deal to say on the horrible tortures which poor people sometimes bear here almost as matter of course, but the less said about this the better. It shows how careless the Chinese are about human life and suffering, that they will often get rid of children by leaving them to starve to death, especially girls, thought far less of than boys, as is the case all over the East. Yet these people seem affectionate in family life, above all to their parents, though wives and daughters will be treated rather as servants. Their houses are made of wood and brick, not very comfortably furnished according to our ideas, but sometimes ornamented with grotesque pictures and figures of carved monsters to scare away the evil spirits which they imagine as always ready to do them mischief. They have a way of keeping their coffins at home to remind them of death, and when a rich man dies, the mourners burn over his grave paper models of money, horses, servants, and all he is supposed to need in the next world. This is an example of the childish superstitions that show how backward the Chinese are for all their learning. They

follow three separate religions, and sometimes all three together, the principal one understood to have been taught by a wise man of old, named Confucius.

Points about the Chinese that seem most striking to strangers are, in the case of the men, their long pigtails, and of the women, the deformed club-feet, which passed as a mark of respectability. Fashion has been so strong that girls were put to years of torture in squeezing and crushing up their feet till they can only hobble upon them; but foreigners so cry out against this cruel absurdity, that even the Chinese are coming to see the hatefulness of it. After all, in our country, too, many women are foolish enough to wear tight shoes that put their feet out of shape.

Another example of Chinese pigheadedness is the clumsy coinage. Silver dollars are now being introduced, but the common money of China has been tin and copper coins with a hole through them, so that they can be strung together into hundreds and thousands, a handful going to make up a penny, and a porter being needed to carry a few shillings' worth to market. The shops in the cities have open fronts to show the goods sold within, and the narrow streets will be almost blocked up by hanging lanterns and signs of the tradesmen. Some queer things are to be seen for sale, for while the Chinese will not use milk, butter or cheese, they are fond of such delicacies as dogs, rats, seaweed, and a kind of bird's-nest which they make into soup. Their chief dish is rice, eaten with chop-

sticks, as in Japan. Many of their ways and customs, indeed, are like those of their kinsmen the Japanese. They also wear loose dresses, made commonly of blue cotton, but rich people's clothes may be of silk, often thickly wadded to keep out the cold, which in some parts of the country is very severe in winter, China being so big that the climate of north and south differs as much as Norway from Italy. Then the people at each end of the country are so different that they can hardly understand each other's speech. Those of the north grow taller, having more of the wild Tartar blood; those in the south appear to be livelier and more enterprising.

We must not forget the good qualities of the Chinese. They are very polite in their manners. The merchants have a name for honesty ; a tradesman makes a great point of paying all his debts by New Year's Day ; and if he cannot, he will sometimes commit suicide rather than face the disgrace of bankruptcy. The country people are very industrious and clever at using up every foot of ground that will grow anything. The fertile soil is covered with crops and with gardens, of which the Chinese are so fond that they call their country "the Flowery Land." One thing they grow is tea, which we first got from China, but now it comes to us rather from India and Ceylon. But the best tea is still grown in China, which sends commoner kinds nearly all over Asia, often pressed into bricks, that pass as money in some out-of-the-way parts. Another plant much cultivated

here is the poppy, out of which is made opium, used by us for medicine, but by the Chinese as a mischievous intoxicant that does them as much harm as drunkenness does among Christians. Silk is another thing that first came to us from this country; also the delicate pottery or porcelain which we still call *china*, though we have learned to make it at home. Then China has mines of coal and of metals, which as yet the people cannot work well for want of machinery; but they begin to allow foreigners to show them all that can be got out of their country.

It would take too long to give a full account of this vast country, which in general may be described as a maze of mountains, with fertile river valleys in which the water is spread over the land by canals and ditches. The two chief streams are the Hoang-ho or Yellow River, and the Yangtse-kiang or Blue River, the latter one of the greatest rivers of Asia, by which boats and steamers can pass into the middle of China, and even before it enters China from the lofty heights of Central Asia, it is already as broad as our Thames. Near its mouth stands Shanghai, the most flourishing commercial port, as being the chief foreign settlement of British, French and American merchants. In the north is Peking, the capital, once boasting itself the largest city of the world, but sadly come down in our time, as are other Chinese cities once, perhaps, as large as London. The largest now is Canton, in the south, which has nearly two millions of people crowded into its narrow, dirty streets, many of

them living in tens of thousands of boats, moored among the islands of the river on which the city is built. In the estuary of this river stands up the rocky island of Hong-Kong, which makes a British possession, turned into a strong fortress, and one of the chief ports of the East. Then there are many other towns both on the coast and up the rivers, known as treaty ports, in which the Chinese have agreed to let European merchants live and carry on their business.

The Tartar lands behind China have little to tempt foreigners, great part of them being icy mountains and sandy deserts. Here the ground is poorly cultivated for want of water ; and the chief inhabitants are wandering bands of Mongol Tartars, with their herds of cattle, horses, and camels. The best of those dependencies is Manchuria, to the north, where industrious Chinese farmers show the people how to make a good living.

The Chinese, too numerous for their own country, seek fortune far and wide, by sea as well as on land. They have found their way all over the Pacific Ocean, as far as to America, and down south to our Australian colonies. In many parts of the world they make themselves useful and thriving ; but they are not liked by white men, partly on account of their objectionable habits, and partly because they work harder and live cheaper, so as to get on often too well to please their neighbours.

XVIII

SIAM AND BURMA

To the south of China lies a broad promontory, broken into capes and islands, which is sometimes called Indo-China, because in its climate, productions and inhabitants, it seems to be a mixture of India and China. It is, in general, a region of mountains at the north end, from which pour down several huge rivers that go on building flat plains about their mouths, as they push out stretches of wet land further and further into the sea. This promontory is inhabited by different peoples, divided under separate governments, while the mountain tribes are often wildly independent, hardly knowing or caring what country claims them.

On the eastern side is a string of native States, Tongking, Annam, Cochin China and Cambodia, that have fallen into a helpless state through ignorance and bad government. The French have now taken possession of these countries, and are trying to improve them ; but as yet the French settlements here seem not very prosperous, the hot, damp climate discouraging white settlers. France rather grudges our having so many colonies all over the world ; yet most of those which she has occupied do her very little good, unless in finding work for soldiers and officials.

The central part of the promontory is Siam, ruled by a native king, who shows more sense than most Eastern

princes. He has tried to learn what Europe had to teach, and has sent his sons to school in England that they may see for themselves what makes a great nation. He has introduced railways, telegraphs, posts and other improvements, carried out by the help of foreign officers, as was done in Japan ; but unfortunately his people are not such a sturdy and smart race as the Japanese, so this country is slow to get out of its old ways, nor can it prevent the French from taking away part of what used to be its territories. The hot, damp lowlands make the natives sleepy and sluggish, while the more manly mountaineers keep to themselves without much minding the king who calls them his subjects.

A good many Chinamen settle in Siam, getting on well, till they, too, are made lazy by the climate. Bangkok, the capital, with half a million of people, half of them said to be Chinese or other immigrants, stands not far from the sea, on Siam's chief river, the Meinam. It has been called the "Venice of the East" from the manner in which it is built in the water, most of the houses being on piles and rafts, with boats for carriages and steamers for omnibuses plying through the floating streets. On dry land, however, the king's palace and other new buildings have been made to imitate a European city, where the brown-skinned Siamese ride upon electric tramways, and are kept in order by small-sized policemen dressed like those of London.

The chief buildings of Bangkok and other parts of

Siam are the great pagoda-temples and monasteries of the Buddhist religion, filled with swarms of lazy monks, who are the teachers of the country, but have not much to teach worth learning. Among the superstitions of this people is an extraordinary veneration for the white elephant, which is the crest or badge of Siam. There are no really white elephants, but now and then one has a grey or light-brown skin which passes for white; and such a one will be treated as a walking idol, lodged like a prince, and fed on the richest food by obsequious noblemen. A circus once came to Bangkok that gave great offence by exhibiting an elephant chalked all over, whereby the showman expected to please the natives, but they were horrified rather at a trick which seemed to them scandalous impiety.

In the south Siam tapers into a long narrow point called the Malay Peninsula, as chiefly inhabited by Malays, a race spreading over into the islands of the East Indian Archipelago, which stretches on to New Guinea. Part of this peninsula belongs to Siam, but the southern end is ruled by Britain, and at the extreme point stands our great port of Singapore. The rich islands beyond belong to different European Powers, chiefly to Holland; but part of the largest, Borneo, is British; and one group, the Philippine Islands, has been conquered from Spain by the United States. The Dutch island of Java is one of the most fertile and populous parts of the world, though terribly

troubled, as is all this region, by volcanoes and earthquakes.

Not long ago a small island here was almost blown away by an eruption, which may have made itself felt as far as England, for the brilliant sunsets in our sky soon afterwards were believed to be coloured by volcanic dust blown over from that other side of the world. The roar of the explosions was heard in India; at their height windows were broken 100 miles away, where the air was dark as night at midday; the cinders blown out fell so thick about the mountain that men could put down planks over them and walk upon the sea, across which ashes were carried by the wind to fall on an island 1,200 miles off; then a year later some of them came drifting on to the southern shores of Africa. It is believed that at least 40,000 persons were killed in this terrible outburst, that would not only overwhelm the poor people and their homes, but blight their fields for long so as to bring about a famine.

The country to the west of Siam, looking across the Bay of Bengal to India, is Burma, which now makes part of our great Indian Empire. This is much like Siam, a land of rough mountains in the north, where wild men and wild beasts live in dark forests, through which pour down great rivers to hot, damp plains that are the most populous part of the country. Its chief product is rice, which grows best on wet land, and in some parts of Burma seven times as much rain falls in a year as we have in most of England. Farther up the

Bay of Bengal is said to be the wettest region of the world, getting more than twenty times our share of rain. Such a rainfall feeds immense forests, supplying fine timber from big teak-trees, floated down the rivers to be hauled and piled up for shipment by elephants, which at this work show extraordinary skill and sense.

The chief river is the Irrawaddy, or "Elephant Water," up which steamers can sail for more than a thousand miles almost to the borders of China. As do most streams in this part of the world, it falls into the sea by many branches opening out like a fan over the flat plain it has formed out of the sweepings of the mountains behind. On one of these branches stands Rangoon, the capital, which we have made into an odd jumble of East and West, broad streets, offices, shops and tramways mixed up with the narrow lanes and low houses of the native quarters. The great sight of the city is the Golden Pagoda, that is to the Buddhist religion what St. Peter's is at Rome or St. Paul's in London. All over the country are dotted such umbrella-shaped temples with gilt roofs, often adorned with gilded bells and huge images of Buddha, or of ugly monsters that pass here for sacred emblems.

Buddhism is the great religion of this side of Asia, one which has had more believers than any known in the world. Long before Christ it is said to have been preached by a king's son in the East, who was so grieved by the sins and sufferings of the world that he

gave up his princedom, leaving his father's palace to live in humble poverty, that he might conquer his own faults and teach lessons of a better life to his fellow-men. One main point in his doctrine seems to have been that no animal should be killed or eaten, since he imagined that the souls of men after death might pass into beasts, rising or falling in life, according as their deeds had been good or evil, till at last they should be purified so as to be freed from all pain and care and wrong-doing. The legends about Buddha make him carry kindness to animals to such an extraordinary point that it is told how he gave himself to feed a hungry tiger; and to this day some of his followers go about with a muslin cloth over their mouths, lest by accident they might swallow a fly. Many truly noble sayings and doings are handed down in the name of this teacher, whose memory is still devoutly worshipped. But if he were a real man, as the beautiful story makes him, he lived so long ago that little can be known of him for certain; and unfortunately his disciples are apt to think less of the best teachings of their religion than of the many foolish and superstitious notions and practices that have grown up about it.

The Buddhist faith encourages too many men to live idly in great monasteries, dressed in yellow robes and going about to beg for their food. Every Burmese lad is supposed to spend at least a few weeks in one of the monasteries before entering upon the work of manhood; then those who prefer to have others work for them

often devote themselves to this life. The most useful work of the monks is as teachers, but they much need instruction themselves; and the British Government has now set up more efficient schools, in which the Burmese learn to give up a good many of their old ways. One custom seems easily left off. The boys, as they grew into their teens, had to let themselves be tattooed from the knee to the waist in such a close pattern as gives them the appearance of wearing skin-tight blue breeches. This operation is so painful that the poor lad would be stupefied by opium before undergoing it, and often it made him ill, so it is no wonder if young Burmans are now apt to be content with a very small patch of tattooing, or even to shirk altogether the honour of which they were once so proud.

We get on pretty well with the Burmese, who are a friendly, lively people, more fond of fun than of fighting, very polite, and not very hard-working. They are small and brown, much given to wear bright clothes, easily satisfied with rice and other simple food, and quite comfortable in a house that is little better than a big box set up on legs. Their great indulgence is smoking, a long cigar being handed all round the family, even the baby getting a suck at it. Another indulgence common in this part of the world is one unknown to us, the chewing of betel-leaves, which blackens the teeth and stains the mouth with a disgusting red foam. It is notable in Burma that women are better off than in most parts of the East, the

mother sometimes taking a lead in the family and supporting her lazy husband as well as her children by keeping a shop, which shows how they had a kind of civilization of their own before we came among them. Much less civilized, and more difficult to conquer, are the tribes of the mountains, through which lofty passes and little-known paths lead over into India.

XIX

INDIA

THE greatest of Britain's conquests is India, an empire almost as large as China, and as well populated, for in it live three hundred millions of people. These are not all of the same race, but the principal stock is the brown-skinned Hindoos, from whom this land is sometimes called Hindostan. With them have been mixed Mohammedans, who, like ourselves, came here as foreign masters, and other strangers, such as the Parsees from Persia.

Again and again India has been conquered by invaders, who ended by losing their vigour on its hot and fertile plains, so that they in turn became the subjects of manlier warriors coming down upon them from the mountains. In the end the whole land passed under the power of Britain, except some small French and Portuguese settlements. The British officials and soldiers who now rule it spend only part of their lives

here, else their strength would be taken out of them in a climate where white children cannot live healthily more than a few years.

The climate of India is on the whole very hot. Even in winter what is there called "cold weather" will be warmer than our finest summer. In this half of the year, for weeks and months together there falls no rain, unless now and then comes a thunderstorm; and day after day in a cloudless sky the sun burns overhead so fiercely that white men hardly dare go out of shade unless in the cool early morning or evening. All at once, at the finest season of our year, the sky grows dark with rain, blown up from the sea by a wind called the monsoon. By this time the dusty ground is cracked and caked by the heat, and the people, sick of sunshine, can hardly breathe in the stifling air of an Indian summer. But when the rain once begins, it usually pours down in torrents, and lasts for weeks, till the dusty plains are turned into a sea of mud and water. But sometimes the clouds pass over without breaking into rain; then great stretches of country dry up, the poor people's crops will not grow, and so comes a famine in which they die by tens of thousands if the Government cannot feed them.

The inhabitants of India depend chiefly on rice and other grains grown in their fields, which are very fertile in years when the rain does not fall short. Most of the people are poor, but their food is so cheap that a whole family live on a few pence a day. The Hindoos'

religion forbids them to eat meat, especially beef, for the cow is looked on as a sacred animal. The Mohammedans will eat beef, but will not touch a pig. All over the country prevail many such superstitions, that help to keep its natives in a backward condition. One bad custom is the way in which they treat women as inferiors, often hardly allowed to stir out of the house, and not thought worth being taught to read; as, indeed, is the rule in most Eastern countries.

The most notable Hindoo superstition is that of *caste*. Everyone belongs to a certain caste or class, from which he has no chance of rising; and he must not even eat with those of other castes, each of which is born to its own rank and occupation. It is not so bad for the Brahmin priests and the Rajpoot lords, who can look proudly down on their fellow-countrymen; but if a man inherits the humble lot of a scavenger or a water-carrier, that is what he must be all his life, and his children after him.

Another feature of Hindoo religion, a better one than its hideous idols and dirty temples, is a reverence for water. A pious Hindoo has to wash himself all over at least once a day; and every morning half-naked natives may be seen turning out to bathe in rivers or ponds, or at fountains in the streets. The holiest places in India are on the banks of rivers, to which pilgrims by thousands go long distances to dip themselves for once in the sacred water that they believe to give them a chance of going to heaven—all the better if their dead

bodies, after being burned to ashes, can be thrown into such a holy stream.

The two chief rivers are the Indus and the Ganges, which come down from the lofty Himalaya Mountains, stretching across the north of this kite-shaped promontory. The Indùs, on the west side, was first known to Europeans, who from it named the whole country India. But the sacred Ganges is the more important river, flowing eastward through the provinces of Oudh and Bengal, ovèr an enormous flat plain which makes the richest and most thickly inhabited part of Hindostan. In Bengal, the river splits up into a maze of channels wandering among marshy islands, where it is joined by the Brahmapootra, another great river flowing from behind the Himalayas; then by many mouths their mass of water pours into the Bay of Bengal, discolouring the sea for more than fifty miles out by the quantity of mud and rubbish it floats down from the mountains.

The plain of the Ganges, along with the higher-lying Punjab province and the hot deserts of Scinde, through which flows the Indus, make the northern breadth or India. Below, it stretches southwards in a narrower tableland called the Deccan, falling to the sea on each side from the Ghauts, mountain edges whose name means steps. Further south this tapering promontory breaks off, to be continued beyond a strait in the richly wooded and mountainous island of Ceylon, that makes another British possession. All sorts of things grow in Ceylon, which, lying near the Equator, is very

hot on the low seashore all the year round; but by going up its inland heights one can get into a climate more like that of England. Here now is grown a good deal of the tea we use at home, much of it also coming from Assam, a hilly and rainy north-eastern province of India.

Colombo is the chief place in Ceylon, a well-known port of call for steamers going on to China, Japan, Australia, and other parts of the world. The capital of all India is Calcutta, a city of a million inhabitants lying behind the mouths of the Ganges. Bombay, on the west, and Madras, on the east side of the Deccan, are our two other chief cities and seaports; and Bombay begins to be one of the most important places in India as the port at which passengers reach it from Europe by steamers passing through the Suez Canal.

Along with those cities which we have made great as seats of our government, there are many older, more famous and stately ones built by the native princes in the days of their power. There is Delhi, the magnificent capital of the Great Mogul, that Mohammedan emperor whose title has passed to our king. There is Agra, at which a marble tomb called the Taj Mahal is sometimes called the most beautiful building in the world. There is Lucknow, another city of native palaces, celebrated for the fighting that went on here in the great mutiny of our Indian army sixty years ago, when a handful of white men, shut up behind slight defences with women and children, defended themselves for months against

an army of fierce rebels. There is Benares, the most sacred city of the Hindoos, where for three miles the Ganges flows past a line of temples and holy places, alive with priests, pilgrims, and the cows, monkeys and other creatures which they look on as objects of worship. Then there are several noble cities, such as Jeypore, Hyderabad and Mysore, still occupied by the Indian princes whom we allow to be called by grand names, and to make a show of ruling, so long as they take care not to oppress their people, as they often did in the old days.

Beside many of those native cities has grown up a cantonment, as it is called, of open roads, bungalows and barracks, where our magistrates and soldiers live in their own way, not caring to be much mixed up with the customs of the natives. The dark-skinned people are more closely packed into narrow, shady streets, where everyone carries on his work in the open air at his own door or outside his customer's house; and rows of shops and stalls make up what is called in the East a bazaar. Native ladies, whose face no man should see, are carried along in curtained boxes; sometimes a great man with all his family will be seen taking the air on the top of an elephant; and now and then one meets servants leading about tamed and blindfolded wild beasts, which the natives train to hunt for them like dogs.

Elephants and camels are much used for beasts of burden in India, where wonderful stories are told of

the cleverness of the elephant; but the camel is more noted for his obstinacy and ill-temper. The gardens may swarm with mischievous monkeys, which the people treat as sacred animals, and will hardly drive them away even from stealing the fruit. On the fruit-trees will often be seen great black clusters of a kind of big ugly bat, known as flying foxes. India has many kinds of fruit not growing here, like cocoa-nuts, pineapples, mangoes and bananas; then on the higher and colder parts we can sometimes cultivate our own apples and strawberries, which to our taste are better than all the sweet and juicy fruits of tropical countries.

In the woods, and especially in great tangled wildernesses called jungles, hide several fierce beasts, panthers, leopards, lynxes, wolves, wild boars, wild buffaloes, and others, none of them so dangerous as serpents lurking in the grass, which every year sting to death thousands of the barefooted natives. Most wild beasts only ask to be left alone by man, and will not attack him so long as he do not meddle with them. Even the tiger, fiercest and cruellest of all, chooses other animals rather for his victims, and sneaks out of a man's way, unless when very hungry or infuriated by wounds. But if a tiger has once tasted human flesh, they say that he afterwards takes to it by choice, so that every now and then a whole district is terrified by a man-eating tiger, or by a mad elephant that has turned against its masters; and when an elephant does go savage it becomes a most dangerous monster.

In the rivers and lakes lie long scaly crocodiles, greedy to snap up men or beasts that come within reach of their cruel jaws. There are big birds, cranes six feet high, vultures, kites and crows, that serve as scavengers in the streets, pelicans and cormorants, which the natives train to catch fish for them. There are beautifully feathered ones, such as gorgeous peacocks, running wild, chattering green parrots, and many-coloured pigeons; and the woods are also full of pretty striped squirrels and darting lizards. Then, like other hot countries, India abounds in flying, skipping and crawling pests, mosquitoes buzzing and stinging all night; venomous scorpions hiding in one's sponge or one's shoes; hideous bloated spiders; ants that eat their way through books, boots, and everything not made of metal, and a plague of all sorts of flies. Huge rats called bandicoots are an ugly nuisance in one's house, around which come prowling dirty friendless dogs; and all night long one may be kept awake by the howls of sneaking jackals. So Englishmen, whose sleep at home will be troubled with nothing worse than the squeaking of a cat or the scratching of a mouse, find much to put up with in Indian life. It may seem a fine thing to live in a country where the sun shines for months together, but the white men whose duty or business obliges them to spend years here are always glad when the time comes for going home to their land of rain and frost and fogs.

It is not so tryingly hot all over India, for as one

goes up the mountains one soon gets into a climate where a fire will be a comfort at night. In the hot season our officials try to get away to hill-stations, such as Simla, in the Himalayas, where the air is cooler and fresher than on the stifling, steaming plains, and where white children can grow up without getting pale and sickly. This is called "going to the hills"; but, indeed, the hills of India are often twice as high as any British mountain, everything there appearing to be on a huger scale than what we are used to. Our biggest river would make only a small tributary of the Ganges; our widest plain would be but a little patch on its green flat; and the whole of England might be packed away into one of our Indian provinces, where one white man lives as master among thousands of black or brown people.

The Himalayas, shutting in India on the north like a gigantic wall, are the greatest mass of mountains in the world, many of them always topped with ice and snow, where no man can live. So far as is known, the highest point of all is one named Mount Everest, seven times as high as our Ben Nevis. Its top has never been reached, though bold climbers have managed to get up nearly as far upon the rocky and snowy sides of other Himalayan peaks. Even the passes through these mountains are often so high and cold that it is a dangerous and painful journey to cross them at any season of the year; and the poor Hindoos, who in their own plains can go next to naked, may here be

frozen to death among the bears and birds of prey that are most at home in those lofty solitudes.

On the north side of the Himalayas is a strange country called Tibet, most of it cold and bleak plains standing as high as the mountain peaks of Europe, and making almost the highest inhabited land on the earth. Few people would care to live in Tibet but its dirty and stupid natives, who are used to the cold all their lives. A great many of them are Lamas—that is, priests of their Buddhist religion, who wear yellow dresses, live in big monasteries, and have little more useful to do than to twirl wheels and reels, which is this ignorant people's notion of offering up prayers.

Till quite lately the Tibetans did not allow Europeans to come into their country, most of which is a sort of dependency of China ; and they would not even let us trade with them, till a British army made its way over the mountains to their capital, Lhasa, and forced the priests who govern it to promise that they would be more friendly for the future. One part of Tibet, indeed, belongs to the mountain State of Cashmere, which is under British authority, a beautiful land much visited for sport and pleasure by white men, who are not so often tempted to go on to the bleak wilds of Tibet.

On the north-west side of India, the famous Khyber Pass leads into the mountains of Afghanistan, a country with a more manly and warlike people. They have often given us hard work to keep them in order ; but

after several wars we now live on neighbourly terms with their ruler, the Amir, whose capital is Cabul.

Beyond the high mountains, which here to the north bunch themselves together as if to make a great blister in the middle of the continent, lie the vast Central Asian dominions conquered by Russia.

XX

THE HOLY LAND

THE western corner of Asia is taken up by countries which have this in common, that their people mainly belong to the religion of Mohammed, widely spread through Africa as well as Asia. This Prophet was born at Mecca, in Arabia, a city that has become the sacred place of his followers, who think themselves bound to make a pilgrimage to it at least once in their lives. The faith he taught was a sort of imitation of Christianity, and an advance on the heathenism of the Arabs, whom it filled with such zeal that they forced the nations around them to be converted to it. But while the wild Arabs burst out into other lands, conquering and converting as far as Spain and India, their own country has remained poor, most of it being wild mountains among wide, sandy deserts, on which ignorant, quarrelsome tribes wander about, seeking what pasture they can find for their flocks. Some parts of Arabia are more fertile, from which came the coffee plant, now grown in

many parts of the world; and the country is also celebrated for its horses and camels. There are few large towns in such a dried-up land, the best-known place next to Mecca being, perhaps, Aden, a rocky point at the mouth of the Red Sea, which is held as a British fortress. On the other side of Arabia is the long inlet called the Persian Gulf, near the mouth of which Muscat has the name of being one of the hottest ports in Asia.

The Red Sea separates Asia from Africa, and the Persian Gulf runs up between Arabia and Persia. Persia was once the greatest kingdom of ancient times, when it tried in vain to conquer little Greece, but itself came to be conquered by the Grecian king, Alexander. Now it has fallen into poverty and weakness, much of it being barren deserts and mountains inhabited by wild robber tribes. It has, however, some large cities, the chief of them Teheran, where the Shahs, as its kings are called, filled their palace with treasures plundered from other lands in old days. Persia has precious stones and other riches of her own, if her people knew how to use them; but what she chiefly wants is rain, which in some parts hardly ever falls. Water is the real wealth of these hot countries, where the rivers often get dried up in sand, or drawn off to the fields long before they can reach the sea. This also is a Mohammedan land; but its people mostly belong to a sect that differs from other believers in their Prophet, as Protestants and Catholics differ in Europe.

The Holy Land

Between Persia and the Mediterranean comes Turkey in Asia, part of which on the north has been conquered by Russia. In the south of it, along the sea, lies Syria, the chief city of which is Damascus, and Beyrout is its most flourishing port. But its most famous city is Jerusalem, in the district called Palestine, that, as scene of Christ's life and death, became the Holy Land of the Christian world, though it is still in the hands of Mohammedan rulers. All the great religions of the world arose in Asia, where Buddhism, Brahminism, and Mohammedanism still flourish in different parts, while Christianity spread rather among the white nations of Europe and America.

Palestine is a country hardly bigger than Wales, poor in all but great memories, thinly peopled, badly cultivated, and ill governed by its masters, the Turks. In the Middle Ages, again and again, European princes and peoples tried to lay aside their own quarrels, uniting in the expeditions famed as Crusades to rescue Jerusalem from its Mohammedan masters. At one time they succeeded in setting up a Christian kingdom here, but in the end they were driven out by the warlike Saracens, whose power has now passed to the Sultan of Turkey. However long and dangerous the journey might be, pilgrims used to come from all parts of Christendom to their Holy City, as the Mohammedans to Mecca and the Hindoos to Benares. In time the most enlightened Christians learned that to do good at home is a more religious duty than wandering off to

holy places; and nowadays the pilgrims to Palestine are chiefly ignorant people of the Greek Church, little better taught than believers in Mohammed and Buddha. But still many tourists from Europe and America are led by reverence or curiosity to visit a land so renowned as Palestine, and a city so beloved as Jerusalem, which is sacred to the Jews also, and to the Mohammedans, both of whom look upon it as the centre of the world.

Travellers to Jerusalem usually land at Jaffa, the Joppa of the Bible, now celebrated for its oranges. Thence a railway takes them up to the Holy City, which lies about forty miles inland. When an army of mail-clad Crusaders first caught sight of Jerusalem, they are said to have fallen on their knees and burst into tears; and they entered it stripped and barefoot, as humble penitents rather than proud warriors. So in our day are many visitors moved by the sight of relics believed to mark where Christ was crucified and buried. But, to tell the truth, these spots are not known for certain; and it is not the best believers who grow most excited in the shrines where Turkish soldiers have to keep rival Christian sects from quarrelling. Different places have been thought to be Calvary and the Garden of Gethsemane. Less doubtful is the site of Solomon's Temple, its place now taken by a great mosque, in which a stone is shown as the one on which Abraham was about to offer up Isaac, and a mark on the ground is made out to be a foot-print of Mohammed. Such

fables and fancies are natural to superstitious religions all over the world.

From Jerusalem devout pilgrims go on to the Jordan, that they may bathe in its water, as Hindoos in the Ganges, and Mohammedans in a sacred well at Mecca. The Jordan flows in a deep cleft at the back of Palestine, to be lost in the Dead Sea, a great lake so full of salts and other mineral matters that a body cannot sink in its thick scum, and the lips or eyes of swimmers smart painfully when touched by the briny water, which has a disgusting taste. The story goes, but it is not true, that birds fall dead in passing over this poisoned sheet, beneath which, according to tradition, are buried the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

To the south of Palestine lies a hilly and desert country through which the children of Israel are believed to have wandered on their way from Egypt to Canaan; and here stands Mount Sinai, of which so much is told in the Bible. This corner, at the head of the Red Sea, is joined on to Egypt by a sandy neck called the Isthmus of Suez. Formerly travellers from Europe to the Asian seas had to sail all round Africa by the Cape of Good Hope; but in our time a wide canal was cut through the Isthmus to let the largest ships pass from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, so that India can now be reached in as many weeks as the voyage once took months. When we cross the Suez Canal into Egypt, we are no longer in Asia, but in Africa.

XXI

EGYPT AND ABYSSINIA

EGYPT is one of the oldest countries in the world. Here reigned the Pharaohs, who built those huge masses of stone or brick, the Pyramids, that have been standing for thousands of years, kept from decay by a singularly dry and clear climate, along with wonderful ruined cities and ancient monuments, to show what a great state once flourished here. Some of its monuments have been brought to our museums, that often contain also Egyptian mummies, the dried-up bodies of men who lived there long ago. From Egypt, too, came the tall pillar called Cleopatra's Needle, now set up on the Thames Embankment in London, where it is not likely to last so long in our damp and smoky air.

There are dozens of Pyramids in Egypt, the largest and most celebrated being a group standing near its capital, Cairo, on the Nile, a famous old city which has had many masters, among them the Caliph Haroun al Raschid that figures in the 'Arabian Nights.' The chief seaport is Alexandria, at the mouth of the Nile, called after Alexander the Great, who made it part of his empire. Egypt was afterwards conquered by the Arabs, then by the Turks ; and now, since its own princes ruled it very ill, it has been taken in charge by Britain, to see that the poor people are not oppressed, and to help them in making the best of their country.

Egypt and Abyssinia

Britain has an interest in looking after Egypt, since it lies on her road to India by the Suez Canal, at the Mediterranean mouth of which has grown up the new seaport called Port Said, and at the other end is the older one, Suez.

Not many of our countrymen live in Egypt, except the officials and soldiers who keep it in order; but a good part of the townspeople are Europeans from the Mediterranean countries; and in winter rich visitors from all parts come to enjoy the fine weather on the Nile, to which our swallows and other birds also take themselves off to spend the cold months of the North. All across Europe they fly in flocks, and right over the Mediterranean, finding their way straight by some wonderful instinct, stopping to rest on land, or sometimes falling tired on to the deck of a ship, till at last they reach their winter-quarters among the rocks and palm-trees of Africa. Next spring they know when to start so as to come back to their old nests with the birds and blossoms on English hedgerows.

Nearly all of Egypt is a mere strip of green land along the great River Nile, shut in on each side by sandy deserts. So little rain falls here that the fields would dry up but for being flooded once a year by the river, which then covers them with its rich mud; while at other seasons the people living along its banks do everything they can to draw up the water by buckets, pumps, and such contrivances, and to spread it over their fields in ditches and canals. Now European

engineers have done great good to the country by making huge dams upon the Nile, in which the water is stored up to be turned on to the land as needed, and not allowed to run so much to waste.

In the lower part of its course the Nile opens out like a fan into many shallow and sluggish branches, watering a broader stretch of country called the Delta, because its shape resembled that of the Greek letter D, or *delta*. This fertile district was so celebrated in ancient times that such an opening out of a river upon the flat plain it forms about its mouth is spoken of as a delta in all civilized countries. Higher up, as the Nile flows by Cairo and other towns, the green plain on its banks shrinks into a ribbon of fields, bearing crops of corn, vegetables, sugar-cane, and so forth, but only so long as it does not fail to be flooded from the river, swollen every summer by heavy rains in mountains thousands of miles away.

All through Egypt the Nile can be navigated by boats; and a railway has been made beside it up to the frontier town, Assouan. Above this the river flows over cataracts and rapids through a wild country called Nubia, or the Anglo-Egyptian Soudan, now that we are trying to tame it from Khartoum, the capital of our government here. A railway runs up to Khartoum, with a branch to the port of Suakim, on the Red Sea; and travellers feel thankful to be carried as fast as possible over the sandy, stony deserts of Nubia, baked dry by a glaring sun. Then, to the south of the desert

region, the Nile's course is through a hot, wet wilderness, inhabited by naked tribes and by wild beasts like elephants and hippopotamuses, that begin to be scared off by steamboats puffing and whistling a good way further up this long river, where sometimes they stick fast in masses of drifting weeds, so thick as almost to block up its channels.

For long it was not known where the Nile rose. Only in our time were its head waters traced to the great lakes of Central Africa, thousands of miles from the sea into which it falls. But some of its branches come down from Abyssinia, a large mountain region to the east, which differs from most African countries in being inhabited by Christians of a sort. The Abyssinians, indeed, are barbarous and ignorant, who have been able to keep much to themselves among their high mountains; but on the low, hot coast Britain, France, and Italy, have made settlements, and from these neighbours the Emperor of Abyssinia seems to be willing to take lessons in civilizing his people.

His empire also differs from most parts of Africa in being still an independent state. Most of this continent, peopled by uncivilized tribes, has fallen into the hands of the chief European nations, who turn large stretches of it into colonies, or have taken in charge the native governments, as Britain does in Egypt. Nearly all of Africa is now marked out as separate divisions, over which Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy or Belgium has the duty of civilizing the wild natives and

their rulers. So in time the whole earth should be enclosed, planted and weeded out like a garden.

XXII

THE LAND OF THE MOORS

At the opposite corner of Africa, opposite Spain, comes the only other great African country that, like Abyssinia, has as yet been able to keep its independence. This is Morocco, the land of the Moors, ruled by a native Emperor, as he is called, who has such hard work to keep his rebellious and quarrelsome subjects in order that the empire seems likely soon to go to pieces, unless it, too, can be taken under the wing of some European power.

Yet Morocco was of old so powerful that it nearly conquered Spain, and once marched an army far into France. All along the Mediterranean coast of Africa other states were founded by the Mohammedan invaders, who came to be called Moors, mastering the old Berber inhabitants, from whom this part of the world used to be known as the Barbary coast. Its seaports—Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers, and others—were long dens of pirates, who sailed out to capture ships all over the Mediterranean, and made raids on the shores of Christian countries, carrying off the poor people into cruel slavery. For centuries the European nations could not put down those bold pirates, till not a hundred years

ago an English and Dutch fleet, by bombarding the beautiful city of Algiers, forced its ruler to release the Christian slaves. Since then France conquered Algiers, and has also taken under its charge the neighbouring country of Tunis. These territories are now peaceful and more prosperous, while Tripoli, which belongs to the stupid Turks, remains poor and little known ; and the only part where the Moors are still masters, what we call Morocco, once rich and famous, has been going back in civilization.

It is the people who are most to blame for this. They are ignorant, fanatical Mohammedans, hating strangers, often robbing and murdering among themselves, and not caring to work if they can get black slaves to work for them. Trade here is chiefly carried on by ill-treated Jews, obliged to live in a separate part of the towns, and to wear a peculiar dress that marks them out for contempt. In many parts a Christian hardly durst show himself without protection, where everybody has to go about armed with guns and swords. The capital Fez, then, and other chief cities inland, are not much visited by strangers, who seldom get far from the coast. One seaport, Tangier, has a good many Europeans living in it, especially in the sunny winter season ; but outside the gates of the town they would be in danger of being carried off by brigands, as lately happened to a British officer employed by the Emperor to train his army, hitherto more like a noisy mob than soldiers.

This poor land is naturally rich enough, watered by a good share of rain and by always-running rivers, whereas many of the North African streams become dried up and flooded by turns. It grows good crops and fruits, notably dates, the best of which come from Morocco. The north end of Africa has a hot climate, but not too hot to work in. The people keep large flocks of cattle, sheep, and goats; and one of their chief industries is the tanning and working of hides, that has made the name of Morocco leather celebrated. They have minerals in the mountains, and great forests of timber. But the country cannot thrive till it gets a good government; and many of the Moors lately rose in rebellion against their ruler, chiefly for the reason that he has been trying to improve a little the state of an empire where he can make himself obeyed only by force.

Behind the plains of the sea-coast, the great feature of Morocco is the lofty range of Atlas Mountains, stretching also to the back of Algeria. These wild mountains, little explored, are less familiar than the Alps, but their name has always been famous, their snowy tops standing far seen from the sea. An ancient legend named them from the giant Atlas, who was here supposed to bear up the world on his shoulders; then, as a picture of this fanciful notion was often shown on early maps, such a collection of maps as we use came by the title of an *Atlas*.

XXIII

THE SAHARA AND THE SOUDAN

BEHIND the Atlas Mountains, stretching at the back of Algeria, and, indeed, almost across Africa, lies a great sandy desert known as the Sahara. This is not one smooth naked flat as we see on the seashore, but rather waves of barren land rising and falling for hundreds of miles, rocky mountain ridges, shifting sandhills, sunburned hollows and plains, broken by dry watercourses and by lakes scummed with salt or soda, sometimes also by the green islands called oases that spring up wherever fresh water can be got from below the thirsty ground. Many of these oases are mere clumps of scrubby trees, but some grow large enough to hold a town or village among fields and woods. One of the best known is Biskra, in the Algerian Sahara, to which the French have made a railway and built here a smart town, where foreigners now come to spend the winter ; then, besides such visitors and French soldiers, the oasis has about twenty thousand inhabitants, black and brown, living among the shade of some hundred thousand palm-trees.

Most of the oases are not so easy to get at. All along the Atlantic coast of the desert, for more than a thousand miles, there is not one harbour, and unlucky shipwrecked crews are like to be cruelly treated by the wild natives. The French, from their Algerian colony

on the coast, are trying to tame the Sahara, and to spread out the oasis fields by digging wells; but still a great part of it is haunted by fierce robbers. Nor is this the only danger of travelling where wells may be a long journey apart, between which people must carry muddy and lukewarm water in skin bottles to save themselves from dying of thirst. It takes a bold man to wander here all alone. Travellers go in parties called caravans, steering across the sand from well to well, and from oasis to oasis, themselves and their goods carried best upon camels. This animal, "the ship of the desert," is so useful because it can go for days without water, and will munch contentedly such dry and prickly shrubs as grow even on the Sahara.

It seldom rains here, in many parts never; and most of the people know not what snow is, though the desert will often be sharply cold at night, as scorchingly hot by day. It is exposed to dark storms, called *simooms*, by which travellers are blinded and almost choked, till the scorching wind loaded with sand has passed over them, which sometimes, indeed, sands up a whole caravan, as in northern lands shepherds may be buried in the snow. More common on those hot dry plains is the *mirage*, a natural phenomenon that cheats men's dazzled eyes. As they wander, thirsty and weary, with nothing but sand in view, there appears on the horizon an enchantment of blooming trees, or of a cool sheet of water; but as they hurry forward to reach it, the mocking sight vanishes like a dream. But when

real water is near, their animals can smell it far off; then there is no holding them back from the blessed well. Often, instead, a well is found choked up, or the wanderers miss their way to it; then they have no help but to kill the poor camels for the sake of getting at a small supply of water which these animals can keep in their stomachs. And sometimes men and beasts die in torments of thirst, leaving their bones to whiten on the desert till they are buried in the next sandstorm. So it is no wonder if the Sahara, though almost as large as Europe, has scattered over it not enough people to make one of the smallest European nations.

To the south of the Sahara, another belt of Africa is known as the Soudan—that is, "Land of the Blacks." The Africans of the north, though tanned by the sun, are seldom black men; but here we get among the real negroes, who chiefly populate Central Africa. The Soudan is by no means a desert, rather, for the most part, a well-peopled and fertile region, watered by great rivers, the Nile on one side, the Niger on the other, while in the centre the streams are lost in an inland sea called Lake Chad, which, like other African lakes, seems to be drying up bit by bit.

Here sprang up great kingdoms and large cities, like Timbuctoo and Kano, hardly known to white men till our time. These states have fallen into decay, and the whole region is now more or less brought under the influence of European Powers, the French colony of Senegal on the Atlantic, the British dominion called

Nigeria at the mouth of the Niger, and the Anglo-Egyptian provinces on the Nile. The best of the black peoples here are a race called the Hausas, who, under French and British officers, make good soldiers or policemen to keep their more barbarous neighbours in order. Such civilization as they had till now came chiefly from Arabs or other Mohammedan conquerors who spread over all this end of Africa. Their new Christian masters have better lessons to teach them; but white men find it hard to keep their health in this feverish region, so that the Soudan does not make a home for European colonists.

The oldest settlements in Central Africa are those on the Guinea coast, that bulges out beside the great Gulf of Guinea; but only the chance of making money quickly will bring Europeans to an unhealthy climate in which they seldom can live more than a few years, and are always hoping to get away from it, the sooner the better.

XXIV

EQUATORIAL AFRICA

In the broad centre of Africa, about the Equator, everything seems to be on an enormous scale. The sun is always far hotter than our bluest sky, and the rain pours down in torrents often for weeks together. Towards the east side of the continent the water gathers in the

greatest lakes of the world except those of Canada, and in flooded swamps choked up with rotting leaves and branches. From such reservoirs flow mighty rivers, the Congo to the Atlantic, and the Nile, running north over half of Africa to the Mediterranean. There are mountains here higher than any in Europe. There are thick forests of tangled trees, through which travellers have almost to cut their way, sometimes wandering for weeks lost in the gloomy shade. Through the forests come crashing big, thick-skinned beasts, the elephant, the rhinoceros, the lion, the tall giraffe, and great apes like the gorilla and the chimpanzee, that seem hideous caricatures of man. One small thing, indeed, is a race of shy pigmies, who have been found hiding in those great forests to keep out of the way of their stronger neighbours.

The people are mostly ignorant blacks; but in the south they begin to be mixed up with another race called the Bantus, not quite so black nor so barbarous. It is only in our time that white men, explorers, missionaries, and hunters have made their way all through Central Africa, and got home to tell of its wonders. The first European visitors came by sea, and naturally fixed themselves on or near the coast. Now the whole coast-line on either side is divided among Christian colonies, whose authority is gradually stretching out over the wild interior. But white men can seldom live here long, as the climate is unwholesome for them, especially on the low, damp, steamy shores that fall

from the higher inland country like the rim of a saucer turned upside down.

One thing we get from this part of the world is ivory, the tusks of the elephants that roam through the forests in herds, harmless to men who do not meddle with them, but when attacked they make terrible enemies. Bold hunters have been so busy in killing elephants for the sake of their valuable tusks, that both they and other big game begin to grow scarce in many parts, though where white men have power the elephants are now preserved like deer or pheasants in our country. There is another kind of hunting which we try to put down, the chase of man. The strong and stupid blacks being found useful as slaves, heartless adventurers made it a business to catch these poor people and carry them off to be sold; so in some parts the very sight of a stranger will scare the natives away, for fear of such a fate.

The slave-trade has long been the curse of Africa. There was a time when Christian nations were as bad as the rest in this crime, nobody thinking much harm of buying or stealing black folk and shipping them off to work in hot lands, far from their native country. Britain set a good example of crying out against slavery, and now nearly all white men have grown to be ashamed of cruelly treating the blacks. The slave-trade is quite put down over most of Africa; but still, in some wilder parts, Arabs or other brutal men-stealers come prowling to drag men, women, and children from their homes

and carry them off into slavery, which remains common among Mohammedan peoples.

Not so long ago travellers in Africa would often meet a gang of slaves being driven down to the coast, chained together, loaded with burdens, beaten on like cattle, and sometimes killed outright, or left to starve when they were too weak to keep up with the hurried march. One white man tells us how his blood boiled at such a sight. "The women, though chained with iron by the neck, were many of them carrying their children on their backs, besides heavy loads on their heads. Their dull, despairing gaze expressed the loss of all hope of either life or liberty, and they looked like a band marching to the grave. Saddest sight of all was that of a string of little children, torn from home and playmate, wearily following the gang with bleeding, blistered feet, reduced to perfect skeletons by starvation, looking up with a piteous eye, as if they besought us to kill them."

Africa has been named the "Dark Continent"; and well says the Psalmist: "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." But of late years the slave-drivers have to be cunning as well as cruel, for they dare not carry on their bad business where the Union Jack or the French Tricolour flies. Before long it is hoped that the European powers will have put an end to slavery all over Africa. Off the west coast there is a large island, called Zanzibar, mainly populated by slaves we have rescued from their oppressors; and on

the other side of Africa the black colonies of Sierra Leone and Liberia belong to freed slaves, sent back to their native continent by Britain and America.

XXV

SOUTH AFRICA

BELOW the vast masses of wood and water that lie about the Equator, Africa begins to dry up again into patches of desert, like the Sahara, though not so large. The broad continent grows narrower towards the south, where the River Zambesi, running almost right across it, cuts off the southern end, which differs from Central Africa in being less hot, wet, and unhealthy, so that white men can live and work here. Among its dark-skinned natives more than a million of whites have settled, mostly Dutch and British; and the English flag flies all over South Africa, except on parts of the coast held by Portugal and Germany.

The sun still shines strong, but behind the low coast-line the land stands high and dry, where the air is bracing and the nights will often be sharply cold. On the east and south sides there are great mountain-ranges, beyond or among which lie upland plains, often as high as any English mountain, covered with grass or with dry heath and scrubby bushes. From these heights pour down rivers, the largest of them the Orange and the Limpopo, but their course is usually too rough and

rapid to be of much use for navigation, and many of the streams dry up in thirsty deserts before they can reach the sea.

On the whole, this is a too dry country, some parts hardly ever getting watered unless from thunderstorms. But wherever enough rain falls the land is fertile, growing rich crops and many fine trees, among which our own oaks begin to flourish, whole barrels of acorns being sent out to be planted in South Africa. Most of the fruits of Europe introduced here bear better than in Europe—peaches, plums, mulberries, apples, pears, cherries, figs, and grapes. But the native plants of South Africa seem better off for thorns and prickles than for berries, like that very common thorn-bush which the colonists call "Wait-a-bit," because one can't tear one's way through it in a hurry. The biggest tree of all is the baobab, nicknamed by colonists the "cream of tartar" tree, its pods, as large as a cocoa-nut, containing a white stuff like that medicine.

On the high plains cattle are reared both by the natives and the settlers; but cattle and horses also in this country often die of deadly sicknesses, or sometimes from the sting of poisonous flies. Over the wild districts run great herds of antelopes and other game, which are being gradually killed off, or driven away by the spread of farms. Fiercer wild beasts, such as lions and rhinoceroses, used to be common, but they are seldom seen now near the settlements; and even further off they have had too many hunters after them. A

plague in some parts are baboons, which live in the rocks, sneaking down to the farms to steal fruit or to kill sheep and goats for the sake of getting at their milk. A still greater plague, feared all over Africa, is swarms of locusts, now and then flying in clouds thick enough to darken the air, settling upon the ground like a fall of black snow, then eating up every green leaf and blade, till the fields look as if they had been burned bare. There are also many strange birds, big and small, biggest of them the ostrich, which is caught and kept penned up in flocks for the sake of its fine feathers.

Then some districts of South Africa are rich in minerals, notably gold and diamonds, which have brought much trouble to the country. At first the white men settling here had to fight with the natives, black Hottentots and warlike Kaffirs, one fierce race of them called the Zulus having more than once fought bravely against our soldiers. But also the Dutch and English settlers did not get on well together; and the discovery of gold and diamonds set them quarrelling more than ever, till it ended a few years ago in a great war that cost the lives of many brave men. The Dutch Boers—that is, farmers, as they call themselves—stoutly defended their part of the country against our army; but they were few and we were many, and they had to give in. Since then their colonies have become British territory; but at least half the people still speak Dutch; and that they were the first settlers here is shown by the Dutch names found

all over the colonies, *berg* for mountain, *veldt* for field or plain, *kloof* for cleft, *klip* for cliff, and so forth. Let us hope that Boers and Britons will settle down peacefully to make the best of a country which now belongs to them both under one flag.

British South Africa is divided into different states or colonies, each with a government of its own. In the Dutch Transvaal province, lately conquered by us, the capital is Pretoria, but by far the largest town in this part of Africa is Johannesburg, that sprang up like a mushroom about the gold-mines of a ridge called the Rand. The gold here has to be crushed and washed out of rocky ground, rough work which the people most greedy to be rich do not care to do for themselves, so they have hired crowds of Kaffirs and hard-working Chinamen to dig for them. The natives, to whom gold is of little use, must wonder at the change that has come over this barren country in a man's lifetime. Tall chimneys are seen rising above rubbish-heaps, where the ground below is hollowed and tunnelled for miles by the mine-workings, lit with electric light; and out of such great anthills the valuable dirt is brought to have the gold separated from it by powerful machinery.

In the same inland region, but outside of the Transvaal boundary, another large town, called Kimberley, has grown up beside the chief diamond-mines. Diamonds were discovered here only about forty years ago, when some children picked up a pretty stone which turned out to be worth hundreds of pounds. But such a

precious stone is seldom to be had for the picking up. The diamonds are usually hidden in pits of blue mud that must be dug out and washed away, till nothing is left but the harder bits, from which the sparkling gems can be sifted. One of the mines at Kimberley is said to be the biggest hole ever dug by man, as at the other end of Africa the Pyramids seem the heaviest buildings he has set up above that ground. That work also is done by gangs of natives, who have to be kept night and day in an enclosed prison, lest they should make off with some of the diamonds, so easily hidden even in a naked man's mouth or hair. Diamonds have such value as being the hardest as well as brightest of stones; and the diamond-mines of South Africa are the richest now known in the world.

Across the great Drakensberg range of mountains, on the east sea-coast, lies Natal, the oldest of our colonies here. This land grows many kinds of crops, the high inland parts having a colder climate; then the mountains gradually fall to hot lowland plains covered with a more tropical vegetation. To work in this warm climate many East Indians have been brought into the country, and now make about half of its population. The capital is Maritzburg, but the largest town is the seaport Durban, which has been made into a fairly good harbour. South Africa is not well off for harbours, as the river-mouths are apt to be choked with sand-bars, and the coast has few deep bays to shelter vessels from its stormy winds.

The chief port and the chief city is Cape Town, the capital of Cape Colony. This stands at the south-west corner of the continent, on Table Bay, so called from the flat-topped Table Mountain above, often covered by a cloud which gets the name of the "Table-cloth." Even in Europe, Cape Town would count as a large city, inhabited by a jumble of white, black and brown skinned people from all parts of the world. Its name, of course, comes from the famous Cape of Good Hope running out here, that is better known to sailors as simply *the* Cape, long such an important point in navigation, round which was the way to India before the cutting of the Suez Canal.

From Cape Town, and from other ports, railways run up into the high lands behind, where as yet there are not many good roads, but rather dusty or muddy tracks over which waggons have to be dragged through thick and thin by a dozen or a score of slow oxen, often breaking down, sticking fast in bad places, or being brought to a stand by some flooded stream. So railways and bridges are much needed in such a rough country. One line already goes all through South Africa, crossing the Zambesi near its Victoria Falls, one of the grandest cataracts in the world. Beyond this river it is being pushed on northwards, astonishing wild beasts and wild men, till some day it should join on to the railway coming up the Nile from Egypt. Then we shall be able to travel easily from one end of Africa to the other, a distance of about five thousand miles.

XXVI

AUSTRALIA

BEFORE the globe was thoroughly explored it used to be neatly divided into four continents, Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. By-and-by new lands were discovered to make a fifth division, which begins to be known as Oceania, consisting of many groups of islands scattered over the Pacific Ocean. The great archipelago of the Indian Ocean led on to other masses of land, which at first got the name of Australasia, meaning South Asia, and the largest of them came to be called Australia. This is now known to be the largest island of the world, so large that it is thought of as a continent by itself rather than an island. Indeed, when one comes to think of it, all America and all the other half of the world are islands, as being surrounded by water.

Australia is a British colony, with, as yet, not quite so many people in it as London, though it is almost the size of Europe. It is divided into different states, each as big as a European country, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, West Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, now united together as the Commonwealth of Australia. These parts were discovered and settled at different times, the first colonists fixing themselves on or near the sea-coast, where are the chief towns, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, and Brisbane.

The best land in Australia is usually near the sea, the

inland plains being often dried up into deserts, where nothing grows but tangled scrub and coarse, prickly grass. There are great salt lakes on those dry plains, on which fresh water is hard to find; indeed, all over Australia the rivers are apt to shrink up or to pour themselves quickly away into the sea, the mountains from which they come being close to the coast. The climate will not be the same over the whole of such a great region; but, in general, Australia has far more sun than we enjoy, and not enough rain. Sometimes for years together there is hardly a shower in many parts; then, again, the rain may come with a rush, flooding the country that had been burned up by drought, or by great fires that spread fiercely through the wood-lands when parched by months of hot sunshine.

The largest trees of Australia are the different kinds of tall evergreen eucalyptus, growing in grassy forests that might cover a whole English county. Then there are many other fine trees and flowers that would seem strange to us, and some funny ones, such as the "bottle-tree," whose trunk is like a bottle, with leaves sticking out where the cork should come, or as cherries that grow their stones outside instead of inside the fruit. The settlers have planted many of our flowers and fruit-trees, which here often grow better than at home. Some such strangers grow only too well, thistles, for example, spreading over the land like weeds. The same fault is to be found with our harmless rabbits, in

Australia breeding so fast that they soon became quite a nuisance, to be killed off like rats.

It is because Australia was cut off from the rest of the world by sea that it came to have many plants and animals different from those of other countries. The peculiar animal most common here is various kinds of the kangaroo, carrying its young ones in a pouch on its breast, and skipping away awkwardly on its long legs. Even the largest kangaroos are harmless and shy as a rabbit, if one leaves them alone ; indeed, the only fierce beasts of Australia are its dingoes, a sort of wild dogs or wolves. We brought into the country horses, cattle, and flocks of sheep, which thrive well on the wide downs and in the open woods so long as the grass is kept fresh by rain ; but when the land withers up in the long droughts, the poor sheep die off by millions unless where they can be carried or driven, perhaps hundreds of miles, to water.

Farmers in England count their sheep by scores and hundreds, but an Australian sheep-owner will have tens of thousands feeding on land where there is so much room for man and beast that an estate may be as big as half a county. In early days the shepherds had to be always on horseback, galloping after their enormous flocks, which might scamper off far and wide. Then whole miles of country became fenced in as huge folds, where the sheep are kept to grow fat on what looks like coarse hay rather than grass, till the time comes for driving them in to be washed and shorn. Cattle also

are kept in herds of thousands, sometimes running wild in the woods for all that can be done to watch them. An Australian country boy learns to ride almost as early as to run, and soon prides himself on being able to gallop all day on a half-broken horse that may have been as hard to catch as a wild cow.

Wool is one of the chief products of Australia; also mutton, which is now brought to us at the other end of the world, kept fresh by being frozen up throughout the voyage. Another thing we get from Australia is gold, as well as less precious metals. Gold has been now and then found lying in nuggets on the ground, though more often it must be sifted from the streams, or dug and crushed out of the rocks in which it is hidden. This means hard work, and not always good pay; but the chance of coming upon some big lump to make the finder rich in an hour is so exciting that all over the world men prove eager to try their luck at gold-diggings. Such hopes brought crowds of adventurers to Australia, many of whom, when gold was not to be found so easily as they had thought, settled down to make their living in some other way.

Most of the Australians came from Britain, who, in their new home, are growing to look upon themselves as another nation. The natives, "black-fellows," as they are called, were a poor race of wandering savages, too stupid to be civilized, and they seem likely to die out, as has already happened in Tasmania, a separate island to the south. The mountainous island of Tas-

mania is different from the rest of Australia, and more like England, because it has a temperate climate and a fair share of rain, while Queensland in the north is hot enough to grow sugar-cane and other tropical plants.

We must remember that on the opposite side of the Equator everything comes "the other way on." There the north is the warm quarter, and the south turns colder as nearer the frozen Pole. Our summer is the winter of this end of the world, where people keep Christmas at what is their midsummer, with roses instead of holly. They go in their shirt-sleeves when we put on our overcoats; and while we are sliding and snowballing, it is their time for swimming and playing cricket. They can play cricket, indeed, all the year round, for over Australia it is so warm both winter and summer that ice and snow are hardly known unless among the highest mountains.

XXVII

NEW ZEALAND

ANOTHER British colony at this other end of the world is New Zealand, which lies some twelve hundred miles from Australia, though on the map they may look close together. New Zealand, like Britain, is a group of islands with a better climate than ours, brighter and warmer, yet not so dry as Australia, nor so unwholesome as tropical countries. There are two chief islands separated by a narrow strait, together stretching about

proved so deadly as to kill off a good part of the population.

Not far off lie the Tonga, or Friendly Islands, which are under the charge of Britain. Samoa is a German colony, and Tahiti the chief French island. All these are richly green, their principal product being copra, and the native fruits and flowers that grow like weeds, as well as oranges, pineapples, figs, and other trees planted here by white men. Not only is the land one great garden, but the clear water shows lovely sights at the bottom of the sea about a coral island. In what have been called "coral gardens" the coral can be seen growing like trunks, twigs, and leaves, with coloured shells and star-fish borne upon them for flowers, where brilliant fish of all shapes and hues, blue, pink, purple, golden and rainbow-tinted, flit among the branching rocks as birds and butterflies among trees.

The largest and most famous group, lying on the north side of Polynesia, is Hawaii or the Sandwich Islands, which now belong to the United States. These islands were visited by our great navigator, Captain Cook, who made so many discoveries on this side of the world. At first he got on well with the natives; but when he came among them again some quarrel arose, no one quite knows how, and he was treacherously attacked and killed on landing from his ship. The people have long ago grown out of wanting to kill strangers; but civilization, as is often the case, has not only tamed but weakened them, and they seem

to be dying out. About three-quarters of the inhabitants now are foreigners, the largest number being industrious Japanese and Chinamen, who make themselves much at home here.

A dreadful disease the Chinese are accused of having brought with them is leprosy, which we read of in the Bible, and which still plagues some parts of the world. It is so infectious that the lepers must be kept by themselves. One of the small islands has been turned into a sort of prison hospital, to which anyone showing the first sign of leprosy is banished to die by inches ; and if his family choose to go with him, they must stay on the island to share the same miserable fate.

The capital, Honolulu, is quite a smart city, whose houses are almost hidden in masses of flowers. The largest island, Hawaii, is celebrated for the most terrible volcanic outbursts on the face of the earth. It has two active volcanoes, on the side of one of which opens a crater nine miles round, filled with what seems a lake of fire ; and at the top there is another burning pit whose glare at night lights up the black cliffs around so brightly that one can read by it nearly a mile away. Tourists come to visit those fearsome spectacles, taking care how they go too near the fiery waves at the bottom, which from time to time boil over their craters to pour down the mountain floods of hot mud or streams of hot lava, which run hissing into the sea. Then the sea itself is sometimes stirred by submarine eruptions or earthquakes, so that it will be sucked away from the

shore, to come flooding back in a great tidal wave, such as often drowns low coral islands and villages on the Pacific coast.

XXX

THE WEST INDIES

AMERICA has been named the New World, because it is not much more than four hundred years ago since this half of the globe became known to civilized countries, when Columbus, an Italian sailor in the service of Spain, won the fame of discovering another continent. He had felt sure that a ship sailing across the Atlantic was bound to come upon land; but for long no prince or other rich patron would help him to carry out his plans, till at last he was trusted with some small vessels for that adventurous voyage. When his sailors found themselves lost, as it seemed, in the middle of the ocean, they began to be afraid, mutinied against their bold commander, and talked of throwing him overboard if he would not agree to turn back. Columbus, now surer than ever that land must be not far off, begged them to hold on for one day more; then, through the night, a light was seen twinkling ahead, and the sun rose to show them a bit of that new world.

What they had hit upon was one of the islands stretching across the hollow gulf that almost cuts North and South America into two parts. Columbus, knowing nothing about this continent, supposed that he had

come round to the back of India. These islands, then, he named the West Indies; and thus all the copper-coloured natives of America came to be called by the ill-fitting name of Red Indians. It was only after several other voyages along the American coasts that sailors made out how here their way to Asia was blocked up by an unknown continent stretching across a great part of the world. The name given it was also not a right one, for it seems to have been christened after a certain Amerigo, who wrote an account of it; yet in poetry it is sometimes called Columbia, as it ought to be in honour of poor Columbus, who got very little reward or gratitude for the discovery that was so important to Spain and to Europe.

The Spaniards made haste to take possession of the West Indies, hunting eagerly for gold and other precious metals, which they believed to be as common here as stones. When they found that riches could be had only by working hard under a hot sun, they set the natives to work for them, and treated these red men so cruelly that almost all the population of the islands died off. Their place was taken by black slaves from Africa, also treated badly by many of their masters. In course of time some of the slaves made themselves free, and the masters of the rest were shamed into putting an end to slavery, a matter in which Britain set an example.

Most of the West Indian people are now freed blacks, many of whom, unfortunately, seem none the better of

having no masters over them. One of the large islands, San Domingo, belongs entirely to the blacks, who have almost ruined it by their ignorance and quarrelsomeness. The largest and richest of all, Cuba, belonged to Spain till a few years ago, when it was set free by the United States, whose Government is trying to teach the people to govern themselves. France has colonies in some of the islands, but Jamaica and most of the smaller ones belong to Britain.

Except a few that have been dried up for want of rain, these islands are very rich and beautiful, basking under a tropical sun that ripens sugar-canes, pineapples, bananas, yams, and other fruits and vegetables, but does not encourage people to be industrious in a climate where one gets enough to live on with little trouble. The West Indies, then, are not always so prosperous as in the days when the blacks were made to work as slaves.

Another hindrance to prosperity is volcanic convulsions that sometimes do terrible damage, as when a few years ago the French island Martinique was overwhelmed by a cloud of hot ashes raining over it for a week; and, still more recently, Kingston, the capital of Jamaica, was half ruined by an earthquake. Such a calamity has often destroyed cities of South and Central America, in some parts of which earthquakes are almost as common as thunderstorms.

XXXI

SOUTH AMERICA

THIS huge continent, joined by a narrow neck to North America, has not more people all over it than our own little country, and many of them are not the best kind of people. South America was mostly settled by Spanish and Portuguese colonists, who let themselves down too much to the ways of the native Indians, living mixed with them, and, in some parts, with the descendants of negro slaves, so as to make a mongrel race that has fallen behind the civilization of Europe. Yet some of the Indian peoples found here were the most civilized inhabitants of America, before white men came among them. About a hundred years ago the Spanish colonies rebelled against Spain, and set up as separate republics, most of which have had a troubled life of revolutions, falling now and then under some tyrant, who, for a time, did what he pleased with a people not fit for freedom. The most successful of these republics are the Argentine States and Chile at the south end, that have not such a hot climate as makes people lazy nearer the Equator; while the Argentine States, whose capital is Buenos Ayres, are half populated by immigrants from Europe, especially Italians, who work better than the natives. Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela are other countries that do not flourish so well. The

largest of all is Brazil, which was a Portuguese colony, and called itself an empire till not long ago; it also has a good many German and other foreign settlers. As an exception to the general rule, the flat lowlands of Guiana, in the north, are shared out as British, Dutch, and French colonies.

Through most of these countries, all down the western side of South America, run the Andes, that make the greatest mountain-range in the world after the Himalayas, several of their summits being three or four miles high. In the north especially, some of them are active volcanoes, now and then pouring out fire and smoke from their snowy craters, for years sealed up by ice. Bolivia, lying in the centre of the range, is the loftiest inhabited country on the globe, some of its bleak plains standing so high that strangers can hardly breathe on them without pain, and cats and dogs will die when taken into the thin mountain air; yet here the natives work in mines of silver and other metals, which used to be the chief riches of South America.

Another peculiarity of this central region is that hardly any rain falls on the west side, so that between the mountains and the sea the land is almost a desert. The clouds burst rather on the eastern slope of the Andes, filling broad streams that unite in the Amazon, the greatest river of the world, which flows almost right across the continent, through the forests of Brazil, watering the earth's thickest mass of greenery. In this land of perpetual summer, drenched by floods

of rain, there are trees which appear like a hillock of foliage, with leaves sometimes so large that a single one would cover a man. Some of them bear bunches of bright flowers as big as nosegays, so thickly set that often, from a distance, the whole tree looks as if it were covered with snow under the burning sun. Ferns grow so huge that a dozen men can lie beneath their shade. In such a tangle is this tropical vegetation packed together, it may be hard to tell what root bears any flower or leaf, since the trunks become woven to one another by a mass of blooming creepers coiling about the stronger stems like snakes, often, indeed, choking to death a tree loaded with foliage not its own. When a great tree falls in such a jungle, it may tear down an acre of other plants bound up with it by twisting ropes, or by sheets of hanging moss. Through those matted forests the only roads will be by the rivers that, in flood-time, spread out into shallow lakes or swamps, half hidden under giant water-lilies and other glorious weeds, such as seem wonders when we can get a few of them to blossom in the hot-house tanks of botanical gardens, like those at Kew.

Further south, the plains on the east side are not so thickly wooded, but often covered with grassy pasture, or fit for crops where there is enough rain. In the far south, the country grows colder and barer, till it ends with the bleak, barren islands of Tierra del Fuego ("Land of Fire"), that should rather be called "Land of Ice." The furthest point is the stormy Cape Horn, a

terror to sailors who have to steer round it; but steamboats can take an easier passage through the narrow Straits of Magellan, winding between the mainland and its fringe of islands. All this end of America is cut up into an archipelago of islands, especially on the west side. On the east side there is one considerable group, named the Falkland Islands, which belong to Britain.

A continent that stretches for thousands of miles from north to south, and that rises from hot, swampy shores to snowy mountain-lands, has very different climates, in which all sorts of things will grow. Among the special productions of South America are cocoa, coffee, sugar, tapioca, several kinds of nuts, quinine and other drugs, and the best indiarubber, which is the hardened sap of trees growing in the Amazon forests. Hence we got originally tobacco, tomatoes, Indian corn, which grows better in the south of Europe than in our own country, and our familiar potato, making itself at home in so many countries. On the grassy plains are reared great herds of cattle, that come to us in the form of tinned meat and extract of beef. One of the strangest products of South America is a mineral matter, called nitrate of soda, dug out of the rainless desert of the west side, and sent across the ocean to enrich the soil of distant countries as valuable manure. That is what commerce does for the world, in bringing a thing of no use where it is found to other parts of the world, where it can be turned to some profit or pleasure, as in the case of the rare and costly orchids of our

hot-houses, that grow like weeds in hot American forests.

This continent is richer in plants than in animals. Its most notable creature is the llama, in appearance something between a sheep and a dwarf camel, which the natives keep in flocks and use as beasts of burden. They have no great quadrupeds or very dangerous beasts of prey; what they call the "lion" is really a puma, as large as a big dog, and their "tiger" is only a jaguar. Herds of peccaries and sharp-snouted pigs, called tapirs, break their way through the forests, swarming also with lively monkeys, brilliant parrots, and many sorts of birds and insects. The most dangerous creatures are serpents of different kinds, especially the huge boa constrictor, that grows as long as a tree trunk, and coiling itself round its victim, will crush it to death, a fate that sometimes overtakes a horse or a man. Horses, which now run wild in great herds, were first brought to America by the Spaniards, and proved a great help to them in conquering the natives, to whom such animals seemed fearful monsters. For travelling in the mountains, hardy mules or donkeys are of most use, that can scramble on the roughest paths, where sometimes good roads are not so common as railways. The highest railways in the world run up the Andes, but they have usually been made by foreigners, as the people themselves seldom care to be in a hurry about travelling or any other business.

XXXII

CENTRAL AMERICA

So we name the long neck of land joining together North and South America, where, but for this, they would be separated by the great Gulf of Mexico. The narrowest part of the neck is called the Isthmus of Panama, now being cut through by a canal like that of Suez, so that ships will soon pass through from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, instead of having to sail all the way round Cape Horn.

Most of this hot region is roughened with woods and mountains, some of them flaming volcanoes that have done a great deal of mischief. The land is generally rich, but the people are poor through laziness and ignorance. They are divided among half a dozen badly managed republics, of so little importance that their names need not be mentioned; but also on the Gulf of Mexico there is one small British colony, called Honduras, from which we get the fine wood, mahogany.

An exception to the general rule of poverty and backwardness is the large republic of Mexico, lying at the north end of Central America. This Spanish colony was long little better off than its neighbours, but for some time now it has had a firm government, under which it begins to prosper as it should. Unless people can agree to obey laws they make for themselves, or a master who knows what is for their good, their country

will be turned into a bear-garden of quarrels and idleness, as surely as a school where everyone did just as he liked without minding what was said to him. And that is the case with some of those American republics that boast of having no king to rule over them.

Mexico has the advantage of different climates in which many things will grow, but the disadvantage of rain that sometimes falls too heavily, and sometimes not enough. The low lands about the coast are fertile, but unhealthy. Further back the country rises to the height of a British mountain, where the air is clearer, yet warm and sunny. Still higher plains rise into cooler air, where yet it is seldom less warm than in our summers. Over all stand up grand snowy mountains, higher than the Alps. The names of these mountains, such as Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, seem so hard to spell that one may be thankful not to go to school in Mexico. Some of them are volcanoes, from which sulphur is got. Mexico is famous for mines of silver and other metals; and the people are now learning useful manufactures that, in the long run, may bring them more profit than digging in mines, especially as they have coal, that proves the most valuable of minerals.

The capital of the whole country, the city of Mexico, would be thought a large and handsome place even in Europe; and, indeed, not many European cities can show such grand sights as the cathedral and palaces built here by the Spaniards. Many Americans and

other foreigners live in Mexico, through whom the country has come to be well provided with railways, electricity, machinery, and so forth. But when one gets away from the great towns, one finds the people not all that they ought to be, often little better than Indians, ignorant and lazy, fond of intoxicating drink when they can get it, and with a weakness for gambling, which is always a bad sign of any nation.

Though their Spanish masters converted the Indian natives to Christianity, on the whole they have got more harm than good from being mixed with white men. Before America was discovered, some parts of this central region were inhabited by races who appear to have been wiser and more civilized than their children are to-day. That they were no ignorant savages in old days is shown by the remains of vast cities and huge monuments they built, now crumbling away or overgrown by the rank tropical vegetation of a climate that soon destroys such wonderful ruins as in Egypt have been preserved by the clear dry air.

Mexico once included a great part of the western side of North America, originally conquered by the Spanish colonists. But their colonies here did not come to much ; and, above the long inlet, called the Gulf of California, all this coast up to Vancouver Island has been taken into the more go-ahead republic of the United States.

XXXIII

THE UNITED STATES

We now come to the great country that fills the main part of North America, and calls itself America, as if there were no other country on the continent worth thinking of beside it. This greatest republic in the world differs from the rest of America in that most of it was first settled by men of the sturdy Anglo-Saxon stock, who knew how to help themselves against difficulties, and could live together in peace under just laws. The States were originally British colonies settled along the Atlantic coast. By-and-by, thinking themselves ill-used by our King's government, they set up as an independent republic, with George Washington for its first President, who, as general of the American army, had defeated our soldiers in a war lasting for years. As a republic, indeed, the Americans are no freer than ourselves. Their President, elected every four years, is trusted with more power than our King; but he too has to obey the laws made by the people in what is there called Congress, answering to our Parliament.

The American Republic grew fast, taking in less flourishing French and Spanish colonies, and founding new States in the wild regions of the West, till now it stretches right across the continent from ocean to ocean. It is as big as Europe, with a population twice as large as that of the British Isles, and growing much faster.

The United States

From all over crowded Europe emigrants keep on coming to America, to try their luck in a land where there is more room for everybody. There are people here from many countries, but most of them are of the same race as ourselves; and foreigners soon learn to speak English, and to think of themselves as Americans rather than Germans, Danes, Swedes, or what not. Few of them are not proud of their great country, whose flag is a pattern of Stars and Stripes, one for each State of the Union, its emblem the soaring eagle, as ours the lion, and Uncle Sam the nickname of this nation, as ours is John Bull.

Within the United States also live coloured races, such as the many tribes of Red Indians, with whom the white men had long fierce wars before their woods and hunting-grounds could be turned into farms. The Indians are all conquered now, and have to live a peaceful and quiet life, which agrees with them so little that they seem likely to die out. Hardly any are left in the oldest part of the States, that lying beside the Atlantic. On this side, the Indians lived mainly in thick woods, building themselves wigwams of bark, and travelling on the streams in light birch-bark canoes. Sometimes they grew crops of corn; but the best part of their food came from hunting and fishing. Now most of the woods are cleared away, and bears, deer, and other big game can be found only in wild mountain parts. In the opener central plains, the Indians depended on the buffalo, which gave them not only

meat, but skins to make tents and clothes. These tribes, when the Spaniards brought horses and guns among them, became better able to hunt down the vast herds of buffaloes that grazed over their country up to our own time ; but now, by white hunters and red, the buffaloes have been so wastefully killed off, that the few left are preserved like curiosities. On the Pacific side, the Indians were usually poorer and less warlike and lived largely on fish, especially the big salmon which sometimes almost choke the rivers here, caught by thousands, to be tinned and sent to Europe.

In the hot Southern States are some millions of negroes, descendants of African slaves, brought here to work for the whites. On the whole these black people were not badly off, but often they had harsh masters who played the bully ; and many are the stories of poor slaves running away to hide in the wet cane-swamps of this region, perhaps to be hunted out like wild beasts with savage dogs. The Northern States gave up keeping slaves, and this helped to make a quarrel between them and the slave States in the South. It came to an angry Civil War about half a century ago, that had nearly split the Union into two ; but the North beat the South, and set all the slaves free. Since then Uncle Sam went to war with Spain, from which he conquered possessions in the Far East and the West Indies, so he now has colonies of his own across the sea.

America seems rather a collection of countries than a single land, each State being as big as a European

kingdom, with a capital of its own, and making laws for itself, so long as they do not go against the laws of the whole nation. The largest State is Texas, in the south, bigger than either France or Germany, which was taken in among the United States from the Mexican Spaniards who were its early masters. The chief State on the Pacific Ocean side, California, was also Spanish to begin with, colonized afresh by enterprising Americans, when it became valuable through discoveries of gold and silver there. Beside Texas, on the Gulf of Mexico, is the originally French State of Louisiana ; and Florida, at the corner of this gulf, was Spanish till less than a century ago. The Eastern States were settled mainly by Englishmen, some of them named after our Kings and Queens, Georgia, Carolina, and Virginia—the last a fancy name for Queen Elizabeth, under whom was founded this oldest of our colonies here. Then beyond New York, which was a Dutch colony at first, in the north-east corner, comes the group of States known as New England, the smallest but the most hardy and thriving of all. The big States in the centre, Ohio, Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, and many others, were settled by the Americans themselves pushing inland from the coast, and from the Great Lakes in the north.

The general capital is Washington, which belongs to no one State, but to all of them. New York, however, is the largest city and seaport, larger than any in Europe except London ; and it is celebrated for the enormous height and size of its buildings, some

of them a score of stories high, or more, from which people are carried up and down by lifts. There is now a plan at New York to build such a Tower of Babel, with more than sixty stories, which would certainly be the highest house in the world. Chicago, in the central part, is the second city for size, and hopes to be the first some day, as it has already two millions of inhabitants. Though not so large, Philadelphia, "the town of brotherly love," founded by the Quakers, is one of the oldest and most famous cities. Another is Boston, the chief city of New England. All over the older States we find British names, Portsmouth, New Plymouth, Rochester, Richmond, and so forth, showing how the early colonists did not forget their mother-land. Later on the people chose rather to invent names for themselves, or to keep the old Indian ones, such as Chicago and Milwaukee ; then other names, like New Orleans, St. Louis, and San Francisco show how these cities were originally French or Spanish settlements.

If we could look down with a bird's eye over the whole of this vast country, we should see as its chief feature the high and broad chain of Rocky Mountains, that runs through it from north to south near the west side, like the Andes of South America. On the east side stand up other mountains, not so high, once covered with thick forests, which have been a good deal cleared away. Between these two mountain ranges opens an enormous valley watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries, the largest of them the Missouri,

which are the veins of this broad expanse of grassy prairies and drier plains rising to the western mountains, the wild land now everywhere being cut up by crops of many kinds, and streaked with roads and railways between growing towns. The Mississippi flows southwards all across the States to the low, sandy, and marshy coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The rivers flowing north soon pass into Canada, some of them going to fill the chain of great lakes, which at one point pours a sea of water over the famous waterfall of Niagara. Other large streams come down to the Atlantic, opening out into bays and estuaries, on which stand the harbours of this side. San Francisco is the chief port of the Pacific coast, where the mountains come too near the sea to leave so much room for long rivers, yet here, too, there are some grand ones, like the Columbia, which flows chiefly in Canada.

Such are the outlines of the main body of this great American Republic. Then, from Russia, it has brought the cold north-eastern corner, named Alaska, a hardly explored and thinly peopled country, bigger than France and Germany put together, which white men might have been content to leave to half-starved Indians had not gold been found in its frozen valleys. This corner is rich also in magnificent scenery on the broken coast-line and among icy mountains, now known to be the highest points of North America.

XXXIV

CANADA

THIS name covers all the rest of North America, where what was at first a French settlement came to be conquered by Britain, and makes now our most flourishing colony, the Dominion of Canada, that stuck to Britain when the United States made themselves independent. Like the States, Canada is divided into Provinces which are practically countries, each with its own local government, but sending members to a general Parliament at Ottawa. There are greater cities in this part of Canada, Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec, this last the old French capital; but they were too jealous of each other to let a rival take the lead, so a new city had to be set up as the seat of government, and got its name from the river Ottawa running into the St. Lawrence.

The St. Lawrence is the great river of Eastern Canada, the oldest settled part, where many of the people still speak French, though they are content to be counted as British subjects. Large vessels come up this broad stream as far as Quebec and Montreal; then by canals, to help them past rapids and waterfalls, they get on to the chain of lakes, that lie like fresh-water seas between Canada and the United States. Lake

Superior, the highest of these, is the largest lake in the world, as big as Ireland, in parts very deep, and its shores rising to cliffs higher than any in England. This mighty mass of water all falls from one lake into another, then by the St. Lawrence into the Atlantic. Other great lakes and rivers flow to the Arctic Sea, and are frozen up for half the year, as is the sea itself, so that ships do not often come that way.

In old days, travelling through Canada was chiefly done on those great waterways through the woods. Now railways run across the continent, taking one in a few days from the Atlantic to the Pacific, by a panorama of varied scenery shown in the different provinces.

Off the mouth of the St. Lawrence lies the foggy island of Newfoundland, famous for its fisheries, and for being our oldest colony over the sea; this does not as yet make part of the Canadian Dominion, but prefers to keep to itself, under the British flag. We land on Canada in the wooded and hilly eastern provinces, where Halifax is the chief town and port. Higher up the St. Lawrence we come to the French-speaking province of Quebec; and beyond that to Ontario, which lies among the great lakes and is largely inhabited by Scotsmen, who have brought their tartans and bagpipes and Gaelic from the mother-land. These are the older provinces of Canada, which later took in vast

stretches of land to the west. In the centre of the continent the railway carries us past Winnipeg, the chief town of Manitoba, by more great lakes, and over vast grassy plains, now fast being broken up to make farms, as corn grows excellently on this land, not long ago given up to wild Indians and the buffalo herds they hunted.

Over the fertile North-West Provinces, the railway comes to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and has to wind its way through their grand scenery into British Columbia. This, the most westerly province, is also picturesquely mountainous, and, lying on the sea, has the advantage of a mild winter climate. Its chief place is Vancouver City, from which one can cross over to Vancouver Island, called after the mariner who first sailed to this coast.

Thus one has passed over a region as large as Europe, in all which, as yet, there live only a few millions of people, though fresh settlers are fast coming in, especially to the rich wheat-lands of the central plains. In summer Canada is hotter than England, but colder in winter, especially over the parts that lie far inland. Yet the winter is not an unpleasant season, as the sky shines bright and clear upon the ground covered with snow for months together, where the people, wrapped up in furs, go sledging and skating, and don't mind the sharp frost as much as we do our damp and windy winters. But they must take care not

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